Game of the Month: **THE PANDORA DIRECTIVE**

19 REVIEWS!

PC GAMES

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO COMPUTER GAMING

QUAKE

CHEATS • TIPS • SECRETS

10 HEAVY METAL!

Mighty Mech Games

PLUS:

Make Your Own Duke Levels!

An IDG Communications Publication

September 1996
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Sneak Previews:
Lords of the Realm II
Interstate 76
Magic: The Gathering

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Rip your friends apart with 2-player head-to-head action at the same computer. Even though one player games are awesome, nothing is more fun than pounding on a friend.

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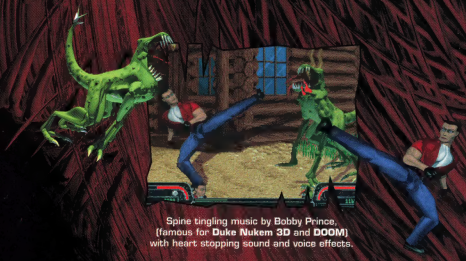
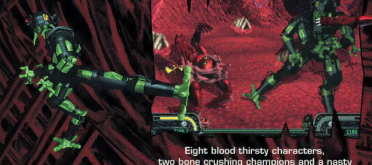


Spine tingling music by Bobby Prince. (famous for **Duke Nukem 3D** and **DOOM**) with heart stopping sound and voice effects.



Eight blood thirsty characters, two bone crushing champions and a nasty surprise that you will never be able to forget.

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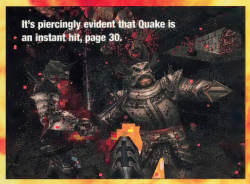
SEPTMEBER 1996

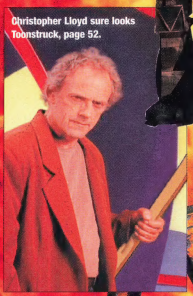
PC GAMES

Contents



It's piercingly evident that Quake is an instant hit, page 30.

Have a blast with 10 hot Mech games, page 36.



Christopher Lloyd sure looks Toonstruck, page 52.

Build your own Duke levels with tips from the Levelord, page 43.

Features

30 **Quake Hits** COVER STORY

By Rob Smith

The most anticipated game in computer history is finally available. We give you the cheats and tips you've been dying for and tell you whether it lives up to the over-the-top hype.

36 **Mech My Day**

By Shane Mooney

Climb inside a giant robot armed to its metallic teeth and obliterate everything that moves. We show you how to get in on the fun with 10 heavy-metal combat games.

43 **Make Your Own Levels of Duke!**

By The Levelord

PC Games brings you the real expert—Apogee's own Levelord, the man who designed most of the actual game—to tell you how to create your own Duke Nukem 3D levels.

52 **Guided Tour: Toonstruck** GUIDED TOUR

By Corey Cohen

Don't be fooled: This zany cartoon-style adventure is laden with humor and gameplay designed for adults. Here's an in-depth look at this unusual world.

PC GAMES™ VOLUME 3, NUMBER 9

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Reviews

Previews!

56 Lords of the Realm II
58 Interstate '76
60 Magic: The Gathering

Game of the Month

64 The Pandora Directive

Action

66 Catfight, Total Knockout Boxing
67 S.T.O.R.M.
70 Fire Fight, Space Hulk
71 Space Dude, Pray for Death

Adventure

72 Monty Python & the Holy Grail
74 Normality

Simulation

76 Afterlife
80 Zapitalism

Sports

82 Big Hurt Baseball, Decathlon

Strategy

84 Gender Wars
86 The American Civil War
88 Battleground: Waterloo

Game Shorts

90 DeathKeep, Total Pinball 3D

Strategy & Tactics

92 Fantasy General
94 Silent Hunter
96 Cheats for Battle Arena Toshinden, EarthSiege 2, Rayman, Strife, and more

How We Rate Games

PC Games uses a letter-grade system to rate games. Everyone who's gone to school knows what our grades mean without resorting to an in-depth explanation or clever chart: an A+ is the best score possible and an F is a complete bust. To give you a better feel for the overall quality of a title, we rate each game in five key areas.

Gameplay: How good are the game's interface and control scheme, and how much fun is it to play?
Getting Started: How much reading, studying, and hardware-tweaking are required before you can start to have fun? (The less the better.)
Graphics: How advanced and attractive are the game's visual elements, and how well do they match the game?
Sound Check: How good are the game's sound effects and musical score, and how well do they fit the game?
Overall Grade: Taking everything into account, how strongly do we recommend the game for purchase?

Departments

6 **Editor's Note:** Fredric Paul

8 **PC Games on Disc**

10 **Letters**

12 **PC Games Online**

16 **Game News**
The first DVD-ROM games, heroines replacing heroes, and the rise of rock in games.

20 **The A List**

22 **The Player:** Steve Klett
The Player becomes The Developer as he creates *PC Games*' custom level for Duke Nukem 3D.

26 **Mac Attack:** Peter Olafson
Learn the Secrets of the Luxor, a Mac-first adventure game. Plus: A-10 Attack's worthy successor.

116 **Talk Back**
Tell us what Quake *really* means—and win a copy of the full game!

Tech Shop

98 **DSVD: Say What?**
By Christine Grech Wendin
Why it's not so easy to talk and play with the first crop of Digital Simultaneous Voice and Data modems.

102 **CPU Update**
By David Gerding
From faster clock speeds to MMX and new bus technology, find out what's happening inside your computer.

106 **Hardware Spotlight**
Reviews of the Falcon Northwest Mach V gaming PC and the SimulEyes VR, plus the Gaming Hardware Hall of Fame.

110 **S.O.S.**
By Patrick Marshall
Honest answers to your toughest technical questions.

Talk and play with DSVD modems, page 98.

Afterlife, page 76.

Gender Wars, page 84.

Normality, page 74.

Lords of the Realm II, page 56.

PLAY *the Demo on the disc*

SEE *MORE* Online
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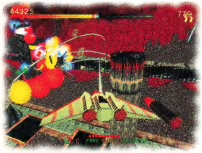
IT'S MORE THAN
A BATTLEGROUND.

IT'S A MIND FIELD.



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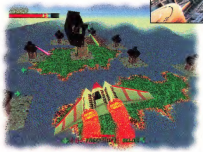

KIDS TO ADULTS
K-A
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

"Stellar!"

— Next Generation, March 1996

PC THAT'S NOT EXACTLY PC
STUDIO 3DO

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Editor's Page

Fredric Paul

If Movies Were Games

Everyone likes to talk about the fact that computer games haven't yet caught on as a truly mass-market entertainment option. Trying to determine the reasons that gaming remains a niche market has caused much head-scratching in the halls of ambitious game companies and giant media conglomerates.

I don't know why, though; the holdup really isn't so hard to figure out. To make things clear, try comparing the game industry to the movie business. This is a favorite ploy of people trying to promote computer games—especially those that use full-motion video—but a closer look illustrates just how far games need to go before they'll be able to snag that elusive mass-market audience.

Imagine for a moment that going to a movie was like playing a computer game. First, you'd need to invest $2,000 or so to buy your own movie projector. That machine would be outmoded in about a year: You'd have to upgrade or buy an entirely new one if you wanted to watch the latest releases.

Even after you took home the latest and greatest projector, you'd have to pay $50 or more to see each movie. Of course, many of these would be borderline awful, with production values that make late-night car-dealer commercials look like *Citizen Kane*.

To make things worse, the only way to preview what a movie might be like before plunking down cash would be to go online and spend hours downloading a partial clip or some fuzzy stills.

Oh, and it would be hard to tell the movies apart, too, since some 90 percent of them would be science fiction or fantasy, and they'd all have titles using the words Shadow, 3D, Ultimate, or Attack in some form or other.

You'd want to be sure you were interested before you bought your ticket, because each show would last from 8 to 40 hours. That length wouldn't be a problem; few people who bought a ticket would make the effort to watch the movie all the way to the end. After all, the protagonist would be pretty likely to kick the bucket in the first reel. Actually, that might be a good thing, because if you did make it to the end, there really wouldn't be much point in sitting through it again.

Sound like a perfect situation for a rental market? Forget it. It wouldn't exist.

Why not? Because not all movies would play on all projectors. And you wouldn't know for sure if a film would play on yours till you got it home and spent several hours trying to make it run. This kind of situation would be financial suicide for retailers trying to rent out movies—they wouldn't make nearly enough money to cover all the hassle.

It's a tribute to the incredible fun provided by computer games that despite all these difficulties, millions of people devote their leisure time and dollars to playing them. Imagine what things will be like when playing a computer game is as easy and inexpensive as going to a movie is today, and when gamers enjoy the kind of choices moviegoers take for granted. That day is coming, and when it arrives, we'll finally be able to welcome the rest of world to our little party. Let's hope they appreciate what they get.

FP

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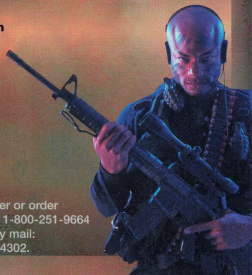

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PC GAMES On Disc

Demo of the Month

Quake

id Software, DOS

The much-anticipated shareware version of Quake is finally here. This first-person shooter from id Software, the team that developed Doom, sets new standards for 3-D graphics. You'll encounter hordes of new monsters and ogres, ranging from the lumbering and nearly invincible Shambler to the rabid, fiercely snarling Rottweilers. New toys include the Nailgun, Super Nailgun, and a Grenade Launcher that'll kill *you* if you're not careful. Of course, you can experience all of this mayhem in multiplayer mode for the extra fun of blasting your buddies.

What's on the Disc?

Demo of the Month
Quake (id Software, DOS)

Action Games
Shellshock (Eidos Interactive, DOS)

Adventure Games
Monty Python & the Quest for the Holy Grail (7th Level, Win/Win 95)
RAMA (Sierra On-Line, Win/Win 95)

Fly & Drive Games
MegaRace 2 (Mindscape, DOS)

Simulation Games
Archimedean Dynasty (Blue Byte, Win 95)

Sports Games
HyperBlade (Activision, Win 95)

Strategy Games
Battle Isle 2220: Shadow of the Emperor (Blue Byte, Win/Win 95)
The Settlers II: Veni, Vidi, Vici (Blue Byte, DOS)

Other Fun Demos
Catz (Virgin, Win 95)
PC Games' New Duke Nukem 3D level (DOS)
Superman and Batman interactive comic books (Inverse Ink, Win/Win 95)

Patches
Conquest of the New World
SU-27 Flanker

Getting Started

Win 3.1

1. Start Windows.
2. Insert the disc in the CD-ROM drive.
3. Select Run from the Program Manager's File menu.
4. Type "d:\install" in the Command Line box and press Enter.
5. Follow onscreen instructions.

Win 95

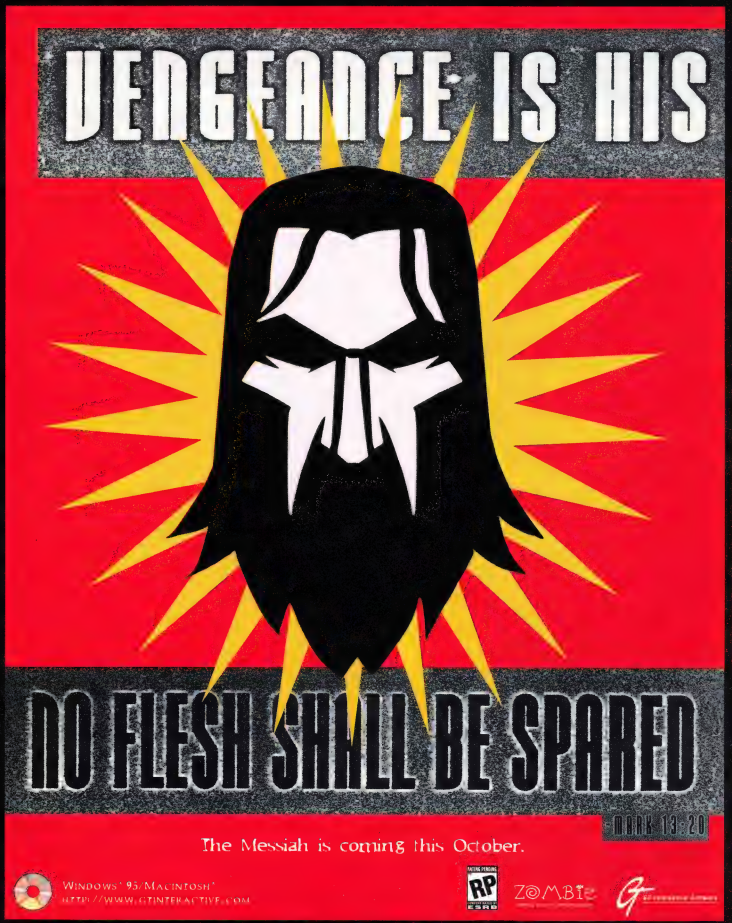
1. Insert the disc in the CD-ROM drive.
2. Wait a few seconds and follow onscreen instructions.

Getting Around

Here at *PC Games*, we know that first and foremost you care about games, so we've redesigned the CD interface to make it even easier to get to the exciting demos. The Welcome screen lists all of the disc's demos and the platforms you can play them on at a quick glance. Just toggle down with the green arrows to see the complete list. For a narrated introduction, click on the Greetings button to hear from our disc editor. Then click on the Take Me to Your Demos button to browse the full demo selection.

Clicking on the demo graphic for a Game takes you to an information screen that lists the system requirements, order and technical support phone numbers, and a short description—everything you'd want to know in one place. We've even made the ReadMe files instantly available, with an option to print. From the Info screen, just click on the Play button for demos that run directly from the interface, or click on the Install button for demos that require an installation routine. Each DOS demo has a pop-up screen with installation instructions. You can print this list for easy reference.

If you are a current subscriber and would like to upgrade your subscription to include the CD-ROM—full of playable game demos—with every issue, please contact us at 800-688-4575.



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Letters

Question of the Month: What's Next?

Now that Quake is finally here, what game are you most looking forward to? Let us know your opinion by writing to us at Letters to the Editor, PC Games, 951 Mariners Island Blvd., Suite 700, San Mateo, CA 94404; faxing us at 415-349-7482, or e-mailing us at pcgamesletters@iftw.com.

Response to our July 1996 Question of the Month (Do you think today's games require computers that are too powerful and too expensive? Or are you willing to upgrade your system to enjoy the latest entertainment?) was an even split. Many of you were annoyed by the growing need for better, more expensive hardware; the rest saw upgrading as a natural step in the gameplaying process.

I do believe that today's gamemakers are making their products require more powerful computers. Those of us who are not rich and can't afford a new computer every time a more sophisticated game comes out are left out in the cold. I hope the computer gaming industry begins to understand the spot we're in. Personally, I'm pushing the envelope at this point and can't buy the newer games because my computer won't handle them.

Roy Bretschneider
RBretschne@aol.com

Today's PC games' system requirements are definitely getting ridiculous. I just upgraded to a P75 and 16MB of RAM, but I still need a new hard drive because Zork: Nemesis chewed up 20MB, leaving me with about 40 free. [gnaa!] I have a 6X CD, so that should last for a while. But now, another headache: I'm going to have to upgrade again to one of those 3-D cards to play some of the new games coming out this Christmas. I'm quite satisfied with the way games are now. Can't the industry just let us enjoy our systems for at least one year?

Jayson Laplante
laplante@mindspring.com

continued on page 12

Fighting Gear

I've noticed there are a lot of fighting games coming out for the PC. Most of them require a six-button controller. I was wondering if there are any gamepads for the PC that have more than four buttons.

Marvin Phan
phanm@sasknet.sk.ca

There sure are, Marvin—lots of 'em, in fact. Some of the better ones include the Gravis GrIP System, which features a pair of eight-button gamepads for head-to-head action, and the six-button PC GamePad from Interact Multimedia Products. There's also MegaMan X, a six-button pad that's bundled with Capcom's MegaMan game. —Ed.

Airbound

I'm a huge flight-sim fan who loves a good dogfight. Do you know of any really good, lifelike flight sims that are compatible with a 486/66, 12MB RAM, and Windows 95?

Evan Khan
Baton Rouge, LA

You've got several choices. For good, straightforward skyfighting, check out I-Magic's Apache and Origin's Wings of Glory. If a hardcore flight sim's more your style, you'll want to give SSI's SU-27 (with patch—see this month's PC Games CD-ROM) a try. Longbow or Advanced Tactical Fighters, both excellent games, should also work fine if you turn off some of the graphic detail.—Ed.

We Want Manuals!

Steve Klett was right when he expressed his annoyance with companies cutting costs with manuals (The Player, July 1996, page 20). But it goes deeper than merely having to fire up your PC to look at a game's instructions. A game's printed documentation can enhance the feeling of exploring a whole new world, one with a personality and a culture. One game that exploited this effect to its fullest was MechWarrior 2.

Activision spared little expense when it came to ensuring that we, the gamers, would be attracted to the whole Mech genre through numerous manuals and items such as Codes and Procedures of the Warrior Caste. The company also included a quick reference card showing the more important keyboard commands and offering modem instructions.

Hats off to Activision. In a world ruled by the almighty dollar, they almost made it seem like they were more interested in my complete satisfaction than their monetary gain.

Josh G. Whiton
subterfuge@iplex.netmcr.com

No documentation in my flight simulator? What a ripoff! All game manufacturers should have to print in bold letters across the front of the box, NO DOCUMENTATION INCLUDED, instead of burying that info on the side of the box. I would think long and hard before purchasing a complex game that had online docs.

As far as game manufacturers assuming consumers would think less of their product if it was "too cheap," what a croc o' doo-doo! If a game was good enough, magazines such as *PC Games* would rate it highly, and then I'd go out and buy it based on the glowing review. Sheesh—are people so stupid that they would purchase a game just because of the cute cover on the box? Read the review. If it's a piece of crap, you'll let us know.

Darrell Johansen
Address unavailable

Whoops

The set of hints in our review of Star Quest I in the 27th Century (July 1996, page 48) was actually the hints for Cyberia^2. For the correct tips, see the reviews compilation on our Web page (**www.pcgamesmag.com**).

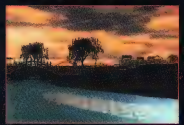
In the same issue, we accidentally omitted the contact number for Apexx Technology, the company that makes the GameLAN networking kit. You can reach Apexx at 800-767-4858.

ILLUSTRATION BY PAUL VALEY

Spiral into the subterranean tomb of Qin Shi Huanghdi.

Discover the wonder and mystery of China's most ruthless emperor.

Light torches, illuminate passages. Enlighten your mind.



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—Steven Greenlee
Computer Game Review

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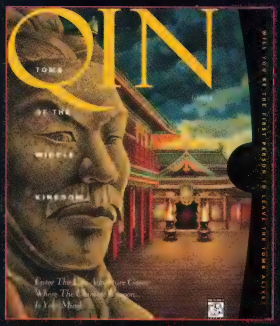
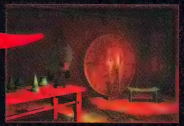
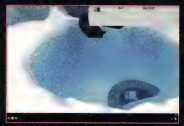


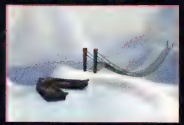


Solve puzzles and avoid traps as you find your way toward multiple game endings.



Compass guided navigation with pull-down realm maps to guide you through the tomb.

Music score recorded on authentic period Chinese instruments creates a full stereo soundscape.



Do you possess the wisdom to unearth the tomb's secret?

Windows CD-ROM

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See even more Toonstruck at PC Games Online—go to http://www.pcgamesmag.com.

Highlights of the Month

The Quake Epicenter

It took long enough, didn't it? But the shareware version of Quake is in our hands, with the full version due anytime now. After you've read our exclusive coverage in *PC Games* (page 30), go online and visit our Quake area for reviews, news, player feedback, and more on the most anticipated game of 1996.

The Best Duke Nukem 3D Levels

As if the 30 levels that 3D Realms provided in Duke Nukem 3D weren't enough, you can also build your own–and with help from the Duke Levelord (page 43), many of you have! Our guide to the best can be found at PC Games Online, along with *PC Games*' own level. (Even if you got it on our CD-ROM, you might just find a little extra in the downloadable version!)

Toonstruck: The Expanded Guided Tour

Kid's stuff? No way. When burnt-out cartoonist Drew Blanc (Christopher Lloyd) falls into a world of his own creation, it's thrill-a-minute grownup adventure. Virgin's hilarious new game mixes live-action video with gorgeous cel animation to produce a twisted, puzzle-solving extravaganza. To get Toonstruck, check out the magazine's Guided Tour on page 52. Then head to PC Games Online for even more on this dazzling new title.

NEW! **Get the PC Games Tip of the Day!** In conjunction with ***PC World*** and IDG Newsletters, we bring you a daily e-mail tip on the hottest games–where to find them, how to play them, and what the cheat is for that one uncrackable level. Go to http://www.tipworld.com and subscribe now!

NEW! ***PC Games*** and CompuServe have joined forces! CompuServe subscribers will soon be able to find all the gaming information they need in the PC Games Forum. Stay tuned for more updates here and at PC Games Online!!

LETTERS, *continued from page 10*

I'm sick of people saying they want better and more realistic games, then whining about system requirements when game developers accede to their demands.

I have been playing computer games since I was 7 and started on an Apple II+. We've come a long way in the 14 years since then, and computer games and hardware have made progress by the miles. I, for one, am glad about this.

Two years ago I paid $3,000 for a 486DX2/66, but I paid for quality. That quality included a Sound Blaster 16 ASP and a SCSI hard drive as well as a CD-ROM drive and VLB video. I will be trading up some more pieces in a month or so, most notably the motherboard and video, and I'll save money by selling the old RAM and video card to a friend or store. I bought 32MB of RAM when prices dropped and a new 6X SCSI CD when my 2X became unattractive to me.

My advice: Buy right the first time, buy the absolute best you can, and trade up when you can. Over this entire deal, I've lost $400 of the original system price to devaluation. That's far better than my friend and his Packard Bell.

Jesse J. Derks
mstsysop@athenet.net

I think that if you are a true gamer and enjoy your hobby, upgrading should not be a problem. As the old saying goes, "To get a little, you have to give a little." Not upgrading would be like staying with an abacus to do your math. If you're not willing to upgrade, don't sit around and whine about it.

Sean Murrin
crareefeet@juno.com

After trying the demos and shareware of the newest, technologically advanced games, such as Duke Nukem 3D and Quake, I decided to buy a new system, mainly because it seemed like I was so behind the "3-D" and "texture-mapped polygons," playing old games on my old system.

Yes, computer technology is expensive, but sticking to the old system is hard for the serious gamer, considering the new games that make slower systems obsolete. Also, the majority of game designers would rather incorporate new gaming technology than stick with the usual formats, while the other designers are cashing in on innovation.

Sean Murphy
smurphy@ccinet.ab.ca

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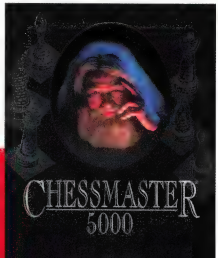

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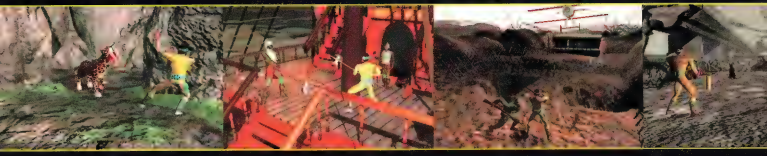

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GAME NEWS

scouting REPORT

3DO's New New World

Reflecting the ongoing consolidation in the computer-game industry and The 3DO Company's attempt to remake itself as a cross-platform software company, 3DO has agreed to pay $13.5 million to buy New World Computing from online gamemaker NTN Communications. New World is known for Heroes of Might and Magic, Iron Cross, Empire Deluxe, and many others, as well as the upcoming Heroes of Might and Magic II and Wages of War. The company line, at least for now, is that nothing will change.

In related news, 3DO has also acquired Archetype Interactive, which developed an online multiplayer adventure game for the PC called Meridian 59. 3DO bought Cyclone Studios, which developed Captain Quasar and Battlesport for the 3DO, last year.

Scavenging for Games

Scavenger hopes to cement its ever-growing reputation with a string of new games designed to complement its eagerly awaited Into the Shadows (see August Game News, page 20). **Amok** is a Mech-style action blaster set in a landscape laid waste after a 47-year war. Loads of missions pad the action, which is presented in stunning graphic detail. Multiplayer support makes the game's ruined cities a deadly playground.

Scorcher, a fast and frenetic racing game, shows the sport of the future as hoverbike riding stars attempt to stay on narrow courses strewn with holes and debris. **Mudkicker** is yet another multiplayer racing game in the stable.

continued on page 18

DVD Games Debut

The Beast Within will go from many CD-ROMs to a single DVD-ROM.

Game players can expect to see a plethora of interactive movies and other video-intensive games when the first batch of DVD-ROM titles are released late this year or early next year. Not surprisingly, many of the first DVD-ROM games will be conversions of existing products.

DVD-ROM, the interactive version of the Digital Versatile Disc designed to play movies, music, and games, holds seven times the capacity of a standard CD-ROM and runs at 7X access speed. Unresolved issues—including copyright protection of DVD products—may delay release of DVD-ROM drives until next year, but game publishers are already prepping their first DVD-ROM titles. While all kinds of games are likely to eventually migrate to the new format, the initial titles will most likely be re-releases of existing multidisc games.

Sierra On-Line, for example, is working on DVD-ROM versions of Gabriel Knight: The Beast Within, Police Quest: SWAT, Phantasmagoria, and Phantasmagoria: A Puzzle of Flesh. "We have a lot of games stored on six to seven CDs," says Sierra On-Line product manager Dale Christensen. "[DVD] will help us cut the number of discs."

Likewise, Activision is preparing to re-release some of its video-heavy titles on DVD-ROM, including Spycraft: The Great Game, Muppet Treasure Island, and Zork: Nemesis, according to Activision chairman Bobby Kotick.

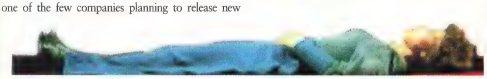
Microsoft is also expected to support DVD, since the company is a chief proponent of the format. Look for Deadly Tide to be one of its first DVD-ROM releases.

As for brand-new DVD-ROM games, Tsunami is one of the few companies planning to release new titles. Two interactive movies —Crazy 8's and Alone— are due on DVD-ROM next year, but Tsunami is hedging its bets and will simultaneously release the titles on CD-ROM. The company is also planning to re-release last year's Silent Steel on DVD-ROM.

Spycraft: returning to your computer soon.

Don't expect that any of these games will have much of a presence on retail shelves, at least at first. It will take DVD-ROM drives a few years to amass a healthy user base, so initially, companies will have to use creative marketing approaches. Sierra On-Line, for example, will likely include a coupon for its DVD-ROM products in each CD-ROM, offering the DVD version for free. Meanwhile, Activision is seeking to bundle its titles with DVD-ROM drives.

—Jane Greenstein



Zork: Nemesis will be one of the first games to move to DVD.

Heroine Addiction

Female characters certainly have a traditional place in computer games—you know, the trusty sidekick, token fighting babe, damsel in distress, or evil dragon lady.

Last year, though, Sierra On-Line challenged the status quo by releasing a pair of major games with female leads: Phantasmagoria and King's Quest VIII: The Princeless Bride. What made these games different from other such attempts—especially those targeted at young women, like Her Interactive's McKenzie & Company—was that they were big-budget hits geared for adventure gamers in general, not just women.

Whether based on Sierra's success or otherwise, more and more new games are making female characters the star of the show. Of course, some are pure exploitation efforts, like Atlantean Interactive's Catfight and Total Knockout Championship Female Boxing (see reviews, page 66), which let you choose from a harem of scantily clad fighters.

There's no first-person perspective in Tomb Raider—you get to check out every good-looking inch of yourself.

On the other hand, several upcoming titles have female leads in roles that formerly might have gone to male characters. In Eidos Interactive's Tomb Raider, you guide Laura Croft on a treasure quest through 3-D dungeons, while in Black Dragon's Riana Rouge, another action/adventure, the title character is on the path to superherodom. Sure, both heroines are gorgeous hardbodies, but you're still expected to relate to the female persona. As Black Dragon's Gillian Bonner puts it: "There's nothing wrong with being sexy and feminine, but being strong and intelligent, too."

Yet some companies still seem worried about using female protagonists. Rocket Science Games previewed the female-driven Obsidian at the Electronic Entertainment Expo last May, but has since refused to discuss the issue. The developers claim they don't want to give away too much of the game; another explanation could be that they're afraid gamers won't respond to a woman in the lead role.

One solution is to let players choose their gender. That's the approach taken by Sales Curve Interactive's Kingdom o' Magic and Gender Wars. Who knows—if this catches on, maybe gaming won't remain a boys club forever.

—Christine Grech Wendin

Your guide, the Conductor, isn't the only female character in Obsidian.

Think like Riana Rouge to win her game.

LEADER BOARD

The best-selling PC games

RANKING	TITLE	LAST MONTH	MONTHS ON CHART	OUR RATING
1	**Duke Nukem 3D** (FormGen; 800-963-2390; DOS CD; $39.99)	–	1	A
2	**Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness** (Blizzard Entertainment; 800-953-7669; DOS CD; $50)	1	6	A
3	**Civilization II** (Micro-Prose; 800-879-7529; DOS CD; $49.99)	2	2	A
4	**Warcraft II: Beyond the Dark Portal** (Blizzard Entertainment; 800-953-7669; DOS CD; $30)	–	1	A
5	**Myst** (Broderbund; 800-521-6263; Win CD; $54.95)	3	25	A
6	**Microsoft Flight Simulator 5.1** (Microsoft; 800-426-9400; DOS, DOS CD; $59.95)	5	10	B
7	**Command & Conquer** (Virgin Interactive Entertainment; 800-874-4607; DOS CD; $59.95)	6	7	C
8	**Descent II** (Interplay; 800-969-4263; DOS CD; $49.95)	4	3	B+
9	**The Ultimate Doom: Thy Flesh Consumed** (GT Interactive; 800-610-4847; DOS CD; $30)	9	9	–
10	**Microsoft Return of Arcade** (Microsoft; 800-426-9400; Win 95 CD; $34.95)	–	1	C

Leader Board is a compilation of top-selling computer games in 1,350 retail stores for May 1996. "Months On Chart" does not necessarily indicate consecutive months. Source: PC Data

scouting REPORT

Here the focus is on the mud-caked domain of off-road racers.

All three games are due out by the end of the year. And if you can wait till the end of next year, look for **Angel**, an action/adventure game with amazing 3-D-rendered graphics. (Scavenger; 213-651-9332)

Direct3D Finally Arrives

After months of anticipation and delays, Microsoft has released the final version of the Direct3D application programming interface (API). Direct3D is considered essential to creating a standard for the many competing approaches to 3-D acceleration for Windows 95–based PC games. So far, more than 80 leading hardware and software vendors have committed to developing Direct3D systems and content, and more than 30 Direct3D-based games are scheduled to be available by February 1997.

Baldies Transplanted

Gamers who've been looking for Baldies ever since we praised this GameTek-then-Atari title a few months back (see review, *PC Entertainment*, April 1996) will be glad to know that a third company has picked up the license. Panasonic Interactive was showing off a good-looking Windows 95 preview of the multiplayer strategy game at the Electronic Entertainment Expo, and the company is readying the game for a September release. Players will battle through a hundred twisted levels in five worlds as they lead armies of chrome-domes against the enemy. (Panasonic Interactive Media; 408-653-1888; **www.panasonic.com**; $39.95)

Play That Funky Music

Not every multimedia music disc is a game, but some developers are clearly attempting to fuse the intense involvement of gaming with the huge audiences and cutting-edge image of rock and rap. This digital fusion is reflected in several upcoming CD-ROMs.

One eagerly expected title, due out this month, is Peter Gabriel's **Eve**. The former Genesis star's second foray into multimedia sends you roaming a pastoral countryside, looking for pathways and critical objects, and exploring the differences and links between men and women. Along the way, you get to build mixes of four Gabriel tunes and check out avant-garde artwork.

Even more of a game is Philips' **Virtual Nightclub**, due in fall. Again, the focus is on finding and experiencing musical performances—in this case, urban music acts such as Stereo M.C.'s, Herbie Hancock, and PM Dawn. But to do so, you have to brave the various entrances to the nightclub rooms and figure out how to get past the oh-so-hip bouncer who guards them. If this reminds you of the Rolling Stones' Voodoo Lounge CD-ROM, be assured that these puzzles are quite a bit harder.

In addition to direct music games, there are many offshoot titles that tie the worlds of gaming and music together. Virtual Music Entertainment's deal with *Rolling Stone* magazine sees The Who's Pete Townshend leading the **Rolling Stone Virtual Bus**; as with all of VME's titles, it works with the VPick and VStix to enable you to strum a virtual guitar or bang a digital "drum." Some Sony Music enhanced CDs, such as those from Prong and the Spin Doctors, also have game modules on them. And there's no end of rockers doing soundtracks for full-fledged games; two of the most recent are Nine Inch Nails' tortured leader Trent Reznor's soundtrack for Quake and God Lives Underwater's work for Viacom New Media's action game SlamScape.

—Donald St. John

Tracking the mysterious difference between the sexes in Peter Gabriel's Eve.

Little Creatures

Question: When is a simulator not a simulator? Answer: When it's the real thing. At least, that's the idea behind Creatures, a new game/science project from Britain's Millennium Interactive. The company–best known for James Pond, DefCon 5, and Deadline–claims its proprietary CyberLife technology actually creates digital lifeforms inside the PC.

The cute little critters bear a passing resemblance to Sega's Sonic the Hedgehog, but are a lot smarter. Once hatched, up to a dozen of them roam a 2-D "painted" environment about the size of 36 screens. Their virtual world is filled with a wide variety of items for them to use and learn about, while a "hand" icon lets you stroke or slap them to get your point across. But what they actually do is up to them.

Millennium uses digital DNA modeling of more than 200 different characteristics so that each creature behaves differently, even when presented with identical stimuli. A neural network of a thousand or so virtual "neurons" and software "hormones" lets the creatures learn to eat, talk, mate, and breed new creatures, while natural and artificial selection can actually change the species over the course of generations. Each creature lives for about 40 hours of computer time before succumbing to built-in aging factors.

Sim fans may want to try their hand at raising Creatures.

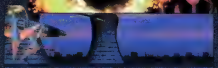
Millennium hopes to appeal to SimCity fans, but stresses that Creatures isn't a sim, it's virtual life–making its own choices and decisions. Still, there isn't really much gameplay here, beyond keeping your charges alive–and safe from viruses, toxic foods, and an enemy creature–long enough to procreate. Creatures' kiddie-style animation may also turn off gamers.

Creatures is due in late September for Windows 95, with a Mac version scheduled for a month later. (Inscape, 800-693-3253; www.inscape.com/creatures)

–Fredric Paul

Driving. Shooting. Slamming. Loud music. No, it's not the Los Angeles Freeway.

Featuring the music of GOD LIVES UNDERWATER



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PC GAMES A LIST

3-D Ultra Pinball

True computer pinball action. (Sierra On-Line; 800-757-7707; Win CD; $49.95)

AH-64D Longbow

For serious chopper-sim aficionados, Longbow's a must-buy. (Origin Systems; 800-245-4525; DOS CD; $59.95)

Longbow will have you flying high.

Azrael's Tear

A beautiful, sensible, and well-balanced adventure. (Mindscape; 800-234-3088; DOS CD; $44.99)

Bad Mojo

Love it or hate it, you've never played an adventure game as a cockroach before. (Pulse Entertainment; 310-264-5579; Win CD; $54.95)

Civilization II

A wonderfully compelling upgrade of the strategic conquest classic. (MicroProse; 800-695-4263; Win CD; $48.99)

Conquest of the New World

Detailed graphics and a satisfying combat mode make Conquest a strategy standout. (Interplay; 800-969-4263; DOS CD; 49.95)

Duke Nukem 3D

King of the first-person action shooters—at least for the moment. (FormGen; 800-367-6436; DOS CD; $39.99)

Fantasy General

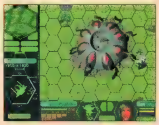
Solid wargaming from start to finish. (SSI; 800-601-7529; DOS CD; $50)

Hyper 3D Pinball

Good looks and great gameplay make it a winner. (Virgin; 800-874-4607; DOS CD; $39.95)

MissionForce: Cyberstorm

Turn-based strategy games don't get much better than this. (Sierra On-Line; 800-757-7707; Win CD; $59.95)



HERCs become the basis for a brilliant strategy game in MissionForce: Cyberstorm.

Mortal Kombat 3

The best home version of the classic arcade fighting game. (GT Interactive; 800-610-4847; DOS CD; $55)

Screamer

This PC racer gives console driving games a run for their money. (Virgin; 800-874-4607; DOS CD; $54.95)

The Settlers II

Blue Byte's strategy sequel is as fascinating as the original Serf City, and much better-looking. (Blue Byte; 800-933-2983; DOS CD; $59.95)

Silent Hunter

An addictive submarine simulation that blends technical seamanship with visceral thrills. (SSI; 800-601-7529; DOS CD; $55)

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine—Harbinger

If you love *DS9* on TV, you'll love this adventure game. (Viacom New Media; 800-469-2539; DOS CD; $49.99)

Deep Space Nine, playing on a computer near you.

Stonekeep

This long-overdue role-playing game actually lives up to its hype. (Interplay; 800-969-4263; DOS CD; $59.95)

Su-27 Flanker

Perfect for serious flight-sim junkies; newbies, beware. (SSI; 800-601-7529; Win 95 CD; $55)

Terra Nova: Strike Force Centauri

The most immersive combat experience available. (Virgin; 800-874-4607; DOS CD; $59.95)

Torin's Passage

There's no better graphic adventure for the whole family. (Sierra On-Line; 800-757-7707; DOS/Win CD; $54.95)

Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness

The best strategy game—and one of the best games—around. Period. (Blizzard Entertainment; 800-953-7669; DOS CD; $50)

Warcraft II: Beyond the Dark Portal

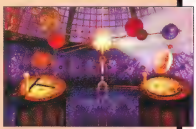
More great Warcraft II excitement with 24 new scenarios. (Blizzard Entertainment; 800-953-7669; DOS CD; $30)

Wing Commander IV: The Price of Freedom

Everything you could ask for in a Fly & Drive game—and then some. (Origin Systems; 800-245-4525; DOS CD; $55)

Zork: Nemesis

The latest Zork once again redefines adventure gaming. (Activision; 800-477-3650; DOS/Win 95 CD; $49.95)



Stunning visuals, creative puzzles—Zork's got 'em. And more.

The PC Games A List includes all the titles that we rated as either an A or A- (or the equivalent) in 1996. See 1995 A List titles at www.pcgamesmag.com.

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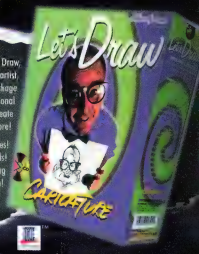

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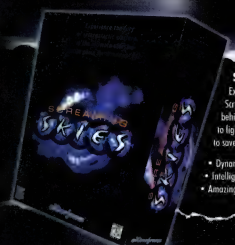

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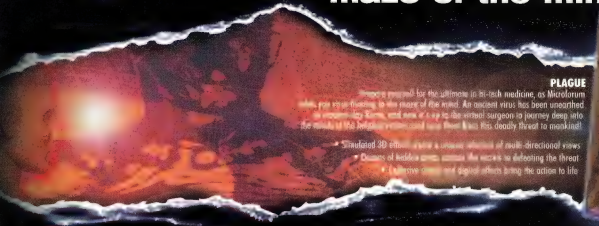
- Intelligent enemies to challenge your strategic skills
- Amazing digitized speech and sound effects

"...virus hunting in the maze of the mind!"



PLAGUE

[illegible] for the ultimate in hi-tech medicine, as Microforum [illegible] the maze of the mind. An ancient virus has been unearthed [illegible] in the virtual surgeon to journey deep into [illegible] this deadly threat to mankind!

- Simulated 3D [illegible] multi-directional views
- [illegible] to defeating the threat
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Steve Klett

Levelord Wannabe

Outdoor areas are fun, but hard to make realistic.

Careful shading will make any homemade level better.

After playing through the shareware version of his addiction of the moment—Duke Nukem 3D—and blazing through the full version of the game, The Player couldn't wait to get his mitts on Duke's BUILD engine and design his own demonic, masterful level. Having never attempted such a feat before, he naively assumed that it would be a relative piece of cake. Not so.

If you don't know already, 3D Realms was kind enough to include with the final version of Duke Nukem 3D the software tools, known collectively as the BUILD engine, that it used to create the game. However, these tools don't come with adequate instructions on how to use them. Heck, it took The Player a couple of days and much online research just to figure out how to *launch* the BUILD engine. That process was followed by more online bantering with other levelord-wannabes and painstaking dissection of Duke's own levels to see how the most basic things were done—simple Doom-style doors, elevators, transporters, swimming pools, and the like.

If you haven't yet attempted your own Duke level but want to, don't be scared off. There's tons of online help available now, and 3D Realms' own Levelord—Richard Gray, creator of the entire first and third episode levels in Duke—guides you through the basics in "Build Your Own Duke Levels!" page 43).

Check out our Web site, pcgamesmag.com, for links to the best online Duke Nukem editing resources.

The Player's level was born after about 60 hours, several BUILD crashes without recent saves, a couple of sleepless nights, countless cups of coffee, unwarranted suggestions from colleagues, and 18 different iterations (hence, its name: Duke18.map). Is it demonic? No question—it has more than 150 monsters, and ammo and health are hard to come by. Is it masterful? Not by a long shot. (If you have this month's PC Games CD-ROM, you can judge for yourself. If you don't, you can get it by calling 800-688-4575, or look for the level on our Web site, www.pcgamesmag.com.)

Regardless, it was encouraging that having never attempted to make a level before, and lacking any programming experience beyond some basic high-school stuff, The Player was able to construct a level with a theme that's fun to play. That's a testament to the intuitiveness of the BUILD engine more than anything else.

Some careful sleuthing on the Internet will turn up scads of user-created levels (for quick links to some of the best, log onto our site). You'll find that most of them, however, are simply permutations of actual Duke levels, or disjointed rooms with little bits of everything thrown in just 'cause you can. The Player wanted a level that took Duke's story and expanded on it—one that gave players a reason to want to play through it and finish it. What to do? A voice, somewhere, whispered, "Build Duke's hideout, and they will play."

The Player had his story, which goes as follows: Duke returns to his secret hideout after kicking major ass in the game. He steps out of a transporter and into his pad, where a kickin' party is going on (The Player's only gratuitous use of dancing women—Duke's a popular guy, after all). In his home, you'll find such niceties as a weapons cache (you'll need to do some searching—got to keep those guns out of the reach of the children), a dance floor with music, a bar, a library, and, of course, a hot tub.

Duke's pad has a set of bay windows that overlook his playground, a combat training room replete with pill boxes, trenches, firing range, and bunker. When he goes to peer out the window, he's greeted with a shower of rockets and machine-gun fire. The aliens have laid an ambush for him yet again, and it's time to clean house. Duke's rampage will take him through the combat chamber, a massive hall of columns, and an outdoor park. The last portion is home to some offices that are very similar to *PC Games*' own, and a button that will nuke any surviving alien scum in the level.

Once you've got a theme, construct a level that fits its flow. Do not, as I did, make your rooms very large, unless you intend to run your level on a beefy Pentium with at least 16MB of RAM. The Player was quite happy with his efforts, until he tried to play it on a high-end 486 and found it to be slooooooow. Think small! Also, stay away from using lots of complex textures in your larger rooms—they gobble frame rate. And frame rate, as the Levelord has attested, is God.

Above all, have fun. Just don't quit your day job before it's done—being a levelord is hard work.

What's on your mind? Send your thoughts, criticisms, and Duke levels to The Player at Sklett@iftu.com.

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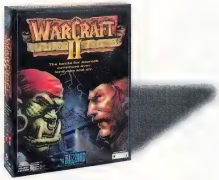
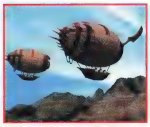
Game of the Year.



#1 Selling PC Game, Jan-April 1996 PC Data Report • **Game of the Year,** PC Gamer • **Multiplayer Game of the Year,** PC Gamer • **Golden Triad Award,** Computer Game Review• **Game of the Year,** Computer Gaming World Readers' Choice • **Best On-line Game,** C/NET

8 Players Head to Head



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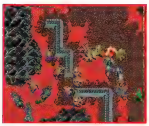

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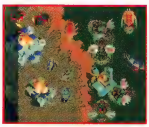

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Peter Olafson

Mac-First and More Ports

Market forces being what they are, Mac-first CD-ROM adventures like **Secrets of the Luxor** are a relative rarity these days. While harkening back to an earlier era, the game celebrates the past with a happy technical wherewithal.

This photorealistic adventure is said to be loosely based on the rides at the giant Las Vegas hotel from which it draws its name. Mercifully, that proves to be a very loose basis. But the game *has* borrowed something from Vegas: glitz. And that quality helps separate Luxor from its predecessors.

In some respects, this is very much the sort of Macromedia Director–based game that surfaced in droves on the Mac in the early '90s. You're an archaeologist exploring a lost pyramid—flicking through the usual slideshow of handsome static screens, clicking on the usual interactive devices of obscure purpose, and beating your head against the usual puzzles-as-walls.

Secrets of the Luxor is loosely based on the pyramid-shaped Vegas hotel. It's also one of the few Mac-first adventures.

But there's a game here. Early on, you'll find a pair of VR glasses that can be used not only to highlight hidden locations, but also to provide a 360-degree rotation a la Zork: Nemesis. Other items include a handheld VCR (with a selection of cassettes); a camera that grabs neat little Polaroids; and a thick diary rich in information. Luxor isn't shy about making you read—something that games of this ilk tend to neglect.

I was so charmed by these toys that it was some hours before I remembered that I didn't have time for slideshows. Okay, so the less-than-perfect Luxor isn't Buried in Time. But the game is a genuine adventure, not simply an art gallery that twitches. That ought to count for something, in any era. (Mojave; 800-678-7282; www.mogames.com; $59.95) (**B+**)

A-10 Cuba!: I just got a peek at an early beta of this follow-up to A-10 Attack!, and may I say one little word? Wow.

What started out as a data disc has turned into a full-fledged sim that builds subtly on the strengths of the original. This campaign against Cuban guerrillas keeps the original's ultra-responsive controls and fluid flight model. Flying this pug-ugly tank killer is like trying to drink from a too-full cup of tea: just touch it, and it spills one way or the other. The designers have also maintained the virtual cockpit—you can look just about anywhere—and the Spartan-but-solid polygonal terrain and effects. Who needs texture mapping when you have this level of detail? I put A-10 Cuba! away an hour ago, and I'm still airborne. (ParSoft; 214-479-1340; www.parsoft.com; $34.95) (Preview: Due fall)

Casady & Greene's Macworld Game Hall of Fame: What a mouthful of a name. But it's also a nice idea: a single CD-ROM collecting Mac stalwart C&G's early classics, as ruled by our sister magazine. You'll find the seminal arcader Crystal Quest; its follow-up, Crystal Crazy; the Rogue-like role-playing game Mission: Thunderbolt; the sweet and clever Glider; and an antique Scramble clone called Sky Shadow.

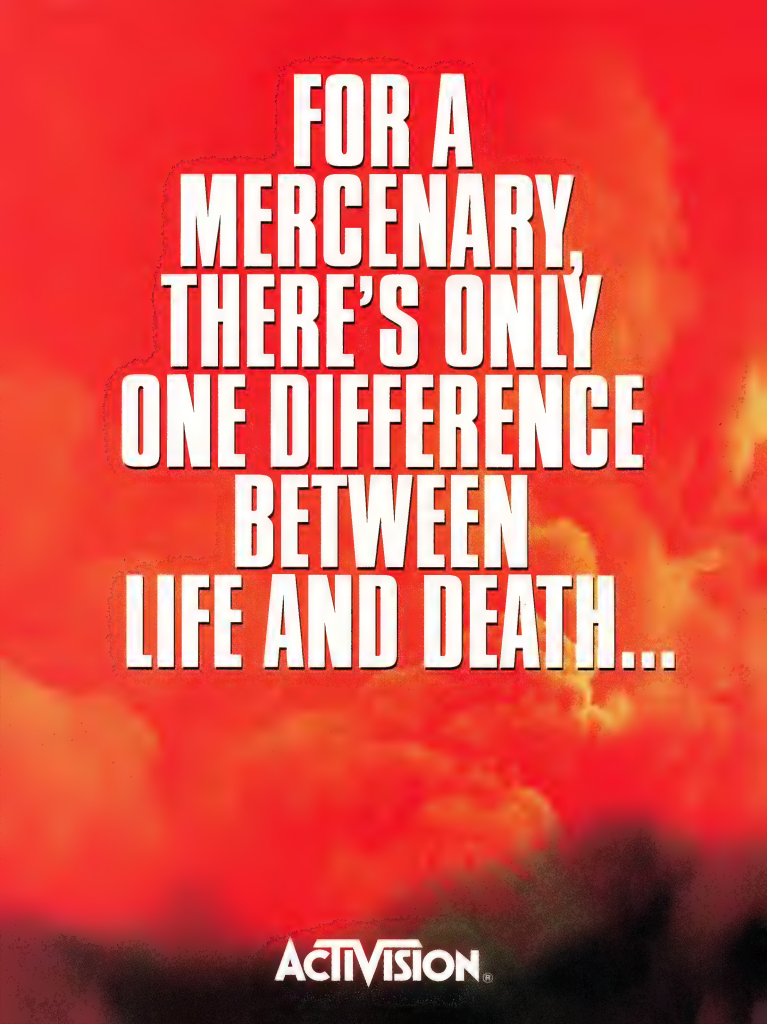
Great stuff, but how about a proper manual? And I do wish the company had made more of an effort to update the games to work on newer Macs: Sky Shadow and the color version of Glider both require 16-color support to work on Power Macs. (Casady & Greene; 800-359-4920; www.casadyg.com; $41.95) (**B**)

Wing Commander IV: The Price of Freedom: A very respectable translation of Chris Roberts' $10 million space opera. The graphics are distinctly better than those in the PC version, which only enhances the cinematic feel. And, surprisingly enough, the fuzzier video doesn't do much to dampen it. Downside? The screen changes are jarring, and—as on the PC—the game is just the WC III formula fine-tuned. (Origin; 800-245-4525; www.ea.com; $49.99) (**B+**)

Star Trek: Judgment Rites: The good news: This talkie edition of Interplay's second Trek is a much bigger, broader game than the original 25th Anniversary game, and it's delightfully authentic. The writers clearly know this subject matter like their own backyards. The bad news: The game crashed religiously at boot on two different Power Macs before I finally got it to run on a Quadra 650. (MacPlay; 800-969-4263; www.interplay.com; $39.95) (**B**)

Hexen: The original PC version of Hexen was the best thing ever to crawl wailing out of the Doom engine, and the high-res Mac Hexen is a chip off the old block. The level structure is almost invisible, it's hellishly large, the graphics have a thunderstorm-at-twilight presence, and a sense of the epic hangs over the game like a shroud.

Then again, there's no excuse for the occasional slowdown and freeze-up I experienced on a 132MHz Power Mac 9500. And what's with those occasional tree-pruning sounds coming out of my speakers? Ouch. (GT Interactive; 800-610-4847; www.gtinteractive.com; $49.95) (**A-**)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QUAKE

It came. It saw. It kicked butt.

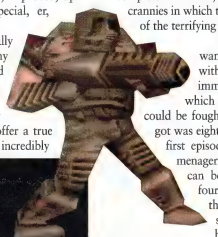
By Rob Smith

THE DATE: SATURDAY, JUNE 22, 1996. THE TIME: 1:11PM. THE PLACE: ID SOFTWARE'S WEB SITE. THE EVENT: QUAKE SHAREWARE RUMBLES ONTO THE NET.

PLAY *the Demo on the disc*

This was the day hundreds of thousands of game players had been waiting for since id Software announced plans for a new, improved, updated, and generally special, er, Doom clone.

id had remained stoically non-committal about many of the features that would make Quake so special, aside from the all-new engine. What it would say was that Quake would offer a true 3-D environment using incredibly detailed polygonal characters—up to 500 polygons each. Superb light-sourcing would create frighteningly atmospheric scenes complete with dark, shadowy nooks and crannies in which to hide—or for many of the terrifying monsters to lurk.



Would-be Quakers wanted action, coupled with a scarily realistic immersive world in which epic deathmatches could be fought. What they finally got was eight gorgeous levels (the first episode), populated by a menagerie of monsters that can be battled in one of four difficulty levels. To this end, the game's storyline—if it can be called that—is supremely underwhelming. Get this: Some guy called Quake has been using government-created "slipgates" to send serial killers to, er, kill, bomb, and steal a nuclear reactor. An invasion is a possibility, but from where? Your job is to find out, and stop it. (Think you could provide a better excuse for all the carnage? See "Rewrite Quake History—and Win," page 116.)

Players may be disappointed by the lack of originality in the arsenal of weapons, too. The standard ax is joined by two different shotguns and a rather sad-looking rocket launcher. The nailgun featured in Qtest (the multiplayer test version that's been available on the Net since February 24) has been redesigned and accompanied by an excellent super-sized big brother. The grenade launcher is devastatingly powerful and you can bounce its ammo off walls, allowing some clever kills for those able to judge their angles.

And you'll need to be clever to get past Quake's lineup of ferocious, well-detailed monsters. Standard Grunts are aided by vicious Rottweilers as basic ammo fodder. Chainsaw-wielding, grenade-slinging Ogres are a tough kill, and the whispering, flying,

Quake
id Software
800-434-2637
www.idsoftware.com

Platform: DOS
Requires: Pentium 60, 8MB RAM, sound card
List Price: shareware

GAMEPLAY:	B
GETTING STARTED:	B+
GRAPHICS:	A
SOUND CHECK:	B+
OVERALL	B+

Judging by the shareware version, Quake has enormous potential.

Coming to Quake

The Monsters

There are some surprises in store in Quake's full version, including a few extra monsters. Check these out:

The Enforcer
With his laser gun, he's the Grunts' big brother.

The Death Knight
A big, meaner and more brutal version of the Knight.

The Rotfish
The underwater areas will become a lot more deadly with these piranhalike creatures.

The Vore
A spider demon–esque monstrosity that's fast and deadly.

The Weapons

The Lightning Gun
Like the Shambler's, your bolts will plow through everything in their path.

amphibian Skrags can attack from anywhere. Devilish Fiends leap into your face and claw for all their worth. Like the Knights, who lash out with swords, Fiends attack toe-to-toe, giving the edge to anyone with a fast trigger finger. A high standard of artificial intelligence makes these monsters even more challenging.

In gameplay terms, there's no flying or crouching—you can only jump a small bit, and the power-ups are on the order of those found in Doom: invulnerability, health bonuses, armor, and a quad-power that'll let you blow your opponents into bloody chunks. Swimming in the lakes, however, is a really cool-effect, and, of course, there are plenty of secrets to unearth.

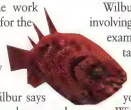
But how much fun is it?

Well, it really is a visual treat, accompanied by excellent sound effects, if not the Trent Reznor soundtrack. But the levels are fairly small, albeit well-designed and rife with cunning traps and nifty little features. We think Quake's good—not perfect—and has lots of potential. Heck, it's shareware (and on the *PC Games* disc), so you can try it for free. You'd be a fool not to.

QUAKE TALK With Jay Wilbur

PC Games had a chat with the ever-friendly public face of id's hard-pressed team, Jay Wilbur, to find out what to expect from Quake's forthcoming three episodes. The first thing we wanted to know: how the Qtest beta impacted development of the upcoming game.

"Two main things came out of it: First, the Net play has been improved dramatically because of the information we received. Second, there's the work with Mpath for IPX support for the Windows 95 release. Also, because of the Net, we can get feedback immediately and react to it immediately."



As for the game itself, Wilbur says that medieval castles, military bases, and industrial fantasy worlds will each play a part. Each episode has been designed primarily by a single level designer, so it'll represent the interests, tastes, style, and vision of its creator. For a peek at some of the upcoming monsters and weapons, take a look at these screens. And jumping ahead to Quake 2, watch for a flying option.

Meanwhile, for Duke players, the lack of a crouching facility is a disappointment, and will undoubtedly alter some of their tactical moves. Wilbur's response: "What is there to crouch behind?" Fair enough—stand there and fight like a man. (Of course, one could also argue that id would have built things to crouch behind if their character was capable of it.)

Wilbur also talked about strategies involving the console command line. For example, setting controls to zoom in on targets is a superb touch for those who enjoy sitting in the dark and sniping at people, while tapping F11 gives you an instant closeup of your target.

With a staff of only 14 concentrating on making the game better, id decided that fans with a passion for UNIX should be allowed to create level editors, so the source code was released shortly after the shareware. Expect user levels to begin appearing on the Net anytime now. —*RS*

All the Secrets

Here's a complete guide to all the secret areas, minus the objects you'll find there. That's for you to discover...

Nightmare Level

If Hard is too easy, check out the Nightmare difficulty level. In the intro area go to the entry to the fourth episode. Drop into the pool, pull back, and then let yourself drop through. Take the door to the left on the ledge (if you wish, shoot the sign on the wall for a cryptic message relating to the full version), and the Nightmare can begin.

The Slipgate Complex

1. On the righthand ledge, shoot the red-marked wall nearest the start.

2. At the first bridge there is a cavern under the water. Follow this through to the steps to trigger the secret.

3. Find the globe on the column by the ledge, then stand below it and shoot it. Now, on the ledge, turn right and shoot the other globe symbol. A back way in can be found at a very differently textured wall around the corner.

4. Shoot the red target in a depression to open a door to your left.

5. Down the walkway, jump onto the banister, onto the light, then onto the switch. Then jump across to the ledge that steps up to a dark recess.

6. Get the bio suit and jump into the slime. Find the passageway that leads away from the steps. Swim up and jump through the hole you reach to a secret with a slipgate.

Castle of the Damned

1. At the start, jump off the bridge to your right. Shoot the lighter green area. Another way to this area is from the next bridge: jump in and through the arch and then follow the passage to the secret.

2. Swim under the ledge that holds a double-barreled shotgun. Follow the passage. A wall will open with a slipgate to your left.

3. Ascend some stairs to a room with a column. Push the button on the column and a door will open to your right.

The Nectropolis

1. Take the steps route to a bridge. Jump down; behind you is an alcove. Shoot the back of the alcove.

2. At the gold key point, look at the torch, then turn 180 degrees. Go forward to the wall until you drop down through the slime. Ascend into the secret room.

3. Where two ogres are on high platforms, shoot the wall behind the armor (killing the ogres removes the bars). Go through the slipgate.

The Grisly Grotto

1. Shoot the two red symbols.

2. Under the water, to the right of the exit to the silver key door, is a small alcove.

3. To the Secret Level.
Walk on all the touchplates on the floor. Go through each opening and touch the switches (one on each side). The cave opening is under the water near the alcove in No. 2 (above). Enter the slipgate.

Gloom Keep

1. Off the onage to your right is a column. Enter it.

2. Go right at the start. You'll come to a room with an ogre. Jump onto the banister, then onto the ledge, then onto the platform where an ogre had been.

3. A column has a torch on it. Jump and push the torch with your head. A door opens behind the column.

4. Climb the stairs to a slipgate. Enter the slipgate from the back.

5. At the exit slipgate, shoot the angled wall.

The Door to Chthon

1. Follow the natural path. In a room adjacent to one of the Q switches, look up to see a red Q. Shoot it. A door will open. Behind the door is a lift. Go up it. Look and then jump down onto the walkway.

2. Go behind the spiked moving wall to the slipgate.

3. At the steps to a locked door, shoot the red symbol to the right. The stairs will lower.

4. Wait under the stairs until they go back up to reveal a slipgate.

Ziggurat Vertigo

1. Get the Pentagram of Protection. Swim in the lava under the bridge to a small room.

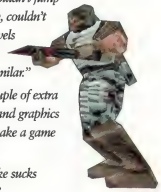
2. After the silver key door, follow the passage to the left and shoot the darker wall to open a door.

Quake Feedback

Here are a few comments taken from gamers on AOL who eagerly played Quake. Do you agree?

"As a single-player game, a bit disappointing so far. For deathmatch play, looks like it's going to be a blast"

"Great atmosphere. Great graphics—incredible lighting effects and phenomenal monsters. Good sound effects....Couldn't jump very high, couldn't duck. Levels all felt sort of similar."



"A couple of extra features and graphics do not make a game better."

"Quake sucks bigtime."

"I loved Duke 3D but I love Quake even more. I like the weapons, the movement, the settings, and I feel totally involved when I play."

"This is just Doom with polys....I think Duke wins hands down"

"Quake is completely and totally superior to Duke in every way, shape, and form....Quake is so much more realistic...surpassing every other 3D game to date"

"Quake's polygonal monsters are much more convincing than bulldogs with shotguns."

The Cheats

Enter these commands at the console in the Options panel.

god: God mode
fly: Fly up to the ceiling
impulse 9: All weapons
impulse 255: Quad damage
notarget: Monsters don't attack first
noclip: Walk through walls
map e1mx (where "x" is any level you want to go to)
sv_gravity x (where "x" is any number; you jump for miles)
give shells x ("x" can be any number up to 244)
give nails x ("x" can be any number up to 244)
give rockets x ("x" can be any number up to 244)
give cells x ("x" can be any number up to 244)
give health: Kills you

"ABSOLUTE GARBAGE."

— Slime Magazine

"PURE TRASH."

— Ratweek

"P.U."

— The Daily Urinal

"IT STINKS."

— The Sunday Compost

"TWO THUMBS UP (OUR NOSES)."

— Fungus & Mildew

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"WE COULDN'T HAVE SAID IT BETTER OURSELVES."

— The Blubs

The Blubs, your average family of space aliens, are in a heap of trouble. They've crash-landed in a garbage dump and need you to help them put their ship back together so they can get back home to their less odorous planet. That is, before a gang of intergalactic bank robbers can get ahold of them. Find out why the critics are calling *Down in the Dumps* the funniest, best-looking and smelliest 3D graphic adventure game ever to (dis)grace a computer screen.

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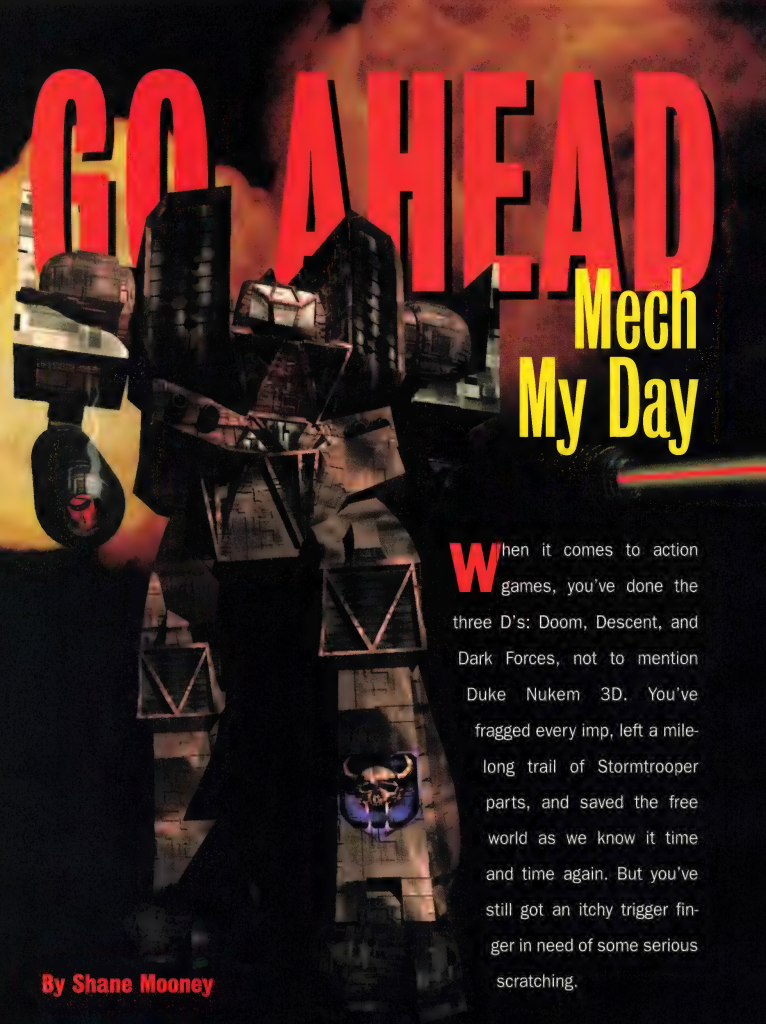


GO AHEAD

Mech My Day

When it comes to action games, you've done the three D's: Doom, Descent, and Dark Forces, not to mention Duke Nukem 3D. You've fragged every imp, left a mile-long trail of Stormtrooper parts, and saved the free world as we know it time and time again. But you've still got an itchy trigger finger in need of some serious scratching.

By Shane Mooney

Even now, a year after its release, MechWarrior 2 has some of the best net blazes of any Mech game on the market.

The best of the modern Mech wars, MechWarrior 2 is still king of the mountain, with high-res, first-person mayhem.

Heavy-metal action games mix strategy and combat for an explosive good time.

Beyond Doom

What's an aging Doom soldier to do? Well, as the saying goes, old space marines never die, they just move on to bigger and badder hardware. If you're tired of BFG pop-guns, maybe it's time to get behind the controls of a giant armored robot. After all, new heavy-metal combat sims are popping up faster than you can say, "Give me a Big Mech with an order to fry."

Mech conquest is nothing new to gamers, of course. Long before there were personal computers, there were Mech games—particularly BattleMech board games, in which you moved miniature versions of 100-ton robots in a futuristic alternative to chess. Nowadays, computerized Mech games let you pilot virtual versions of these metal monstrosities—mastering the first-person controls for guiding your Mechs around the planetscape, using a half-dozen weapons systems to blast away at enemy robots. Learning a dozen or so keyboard commands will put you in control of the subtle nuances of your Mech—and make the difference between life and a fiery demise.

Unlike your typical first-person slayathons, where you just point and shoot, Mech sims require a bit of strategy, including clever use of terrain and disabling your opponent so his parts are still intact. And though the not-so-distant Mech past hasn't exactly earned a good rep with such disappointments as Iron Assault, the three current contenders—MechWarrior 2, EarthSiege 2, and Terra Nova—are enough to satisfy even the most jaded action veteran. Even more promising is the release of a half-dozen new or expanded Mech games within the next year. Indeed, the future of these heavy-metal games looks far brighter than that portrayed by the post-apocalyptic Mech sims themselves.

If you haven't yet taken the plunge into the Mech-believe world of robotic combat, we'll show you what you've been missing and help you get started with tips for MechWarrior 2, EarthSiege 2, and Terra Nova. If you're already a Mech maven, we'll also tell you about a slew of new games just over the horizon.

MechWarrior 2

• When attacking an enemy Mech, go for the legs. If you destroy both of them, the enemy is history. Even eliminating just one leg renders him extremely vulnerable. • If you're really good, aim for the arms. That's where most of the firepower is. • It's not honorable, but you can have your teammates go and fight most of the battle for you, taking most of the damage while you hold back or hide out. • If you're being followed, head into a canyon or behind a building and power down. You'll be invisible to the enemy Mech's sensors, so as soon as you eye him, you can power up and blast him.

MechWarrior 2

The current king of the Mech mountain is MechWarrior 2 (MW2), and with good reason. If you're an action fan and don't own this game, check your pulse to make sure you're indeed alive, and then go—nay, run—to the software store.

MW2 is more than just a run-in-and-blow-away-everything-in-sight game. In MW2, missions have objectives: You must go from Point A to Point B to Point C, while blowing away everything in sight. The year is 3058, and much of mankind has become divided into clans who fight each other for the universe. Warriors piloting huge BattleMechs armed to the teeth carry out the battles. Once you've chosen between the Jade Falcon or Wolf clan you fight your way through missions in hopes of rising through the ranks, vanquishing the enemy, and ultimately achieving the highest rank possible for a MechWarrior—Khan.

MechWarrior's wonderful graphics let you play in 320-by-240, 640-by-480, or even 1024-by-768 resolution, though you'll need a smoking system to handle the latter. The game also gives you lots of choices when it comes to play: an assortment of 15 different customizable Mechs, which you can equip with 27 different weapons. You'll find yourself on worlds ranging from broiling deserts to frozen ice planets, something to consider when planning your strategy. A hot environment, for example, will encourage your weapons systems to overheat, so you'll have to be a little more careful when shooting.

The game's Battletech universe also offers a lot of depth, and to learn more about your clan, you can read plenty of background information included on the disc. MechWarrior 2's voice acting is top-notch, the sound (done by the same studio responsible for *True Lies*) is incredible, and few musical scores are better for blowing rival Mechs to smithereens.

With brilliant graphics and intense gameplay, EarthSiege 2 is the only serious contender for the Mech crown—even if it does run under Win 95.

Visually, EarthSiege 2 may be the best of the bunch.

Another great feature, especially for Mech newbies, is the game's training missions, which help you get familiar with the many controls without having to die a hundred times. Once you get the hang of things, you can be assured of plenty of play thanks to the game's choice of clans, which essentially gives you two games in one. If you aren't in the mood for campaigning, you can always opt for the Trials of Grievance, which will grant you some quick action without any long-term commitments.

For all its cool options, MW2 isn't perfect. Its artificial intelligence, though quite good, still has a few quirks, as you'll see when enemies throw caution to the wind and come blazing straight at you. Also, the graphics are beginning to look a bit dated, especially next to the latest crop of Mech sims. But overall, it's still a cutting-edge game, even a year after its release. If you're an action gamer, MW2 is an absolute must-have, especially if you're new to the world of Mechs. (Activision; 800-477-3650; www.activision.com; Win 95 CD, $49.95; DOS CD, $59.95)

More MW2: Ghost Bear's Legacy

If you thought MechWarrior 2 was hot, you ain't seen nothin' till you load up the expansion pack, Ghost Bear's Legacy. Ghost Bear takes all the great features of MW2 and adds a few more bells and whistles.

The Ghost Bear clan has emerged from its refuge, eager to take on the weakened Jade Falcon and Wolf clans. Twelve new BattleMechs and devastating new weapons technology are the highlights of this pack. As if that weren't enough, Activision gives a dozen new missions across 10 new worlds, including underwater, snow, and space environments. If you loved MW2, you'll dig this excellent addon. Be warned, though: Ghost Bear was designed expressly for veteran Mech pilots, and many of its missions are extremely difficult.

By the time you read this, several new additions to the MW2 world should also be in place. NetMech for DOS will allow up to eight players to have network battles, and it'll be available for free download from Activision's Web site. Activision has also released a graphically enhanced version of MW2 that works only with ATI Technologies' 3D Rage accelerator (see review in next month's issue). There's also word of a 3-D version of MW2 that will take advantage of Microsoft's Direct 3D, not to mention another episode in the MechWarrior franchise (see MechWarrior 2: Mercenaries, below). (Activision; 800-477- 3650; www.activision.com; DOS CD; $29.95)

EarthSiege 2

- To avoid energy depletion, add an energy pod to your HERC if more than 30 percent of your weapons are laser-type cannons.
- You're better off building a new HERC than doing lots of salvaging to fix a heavily damaged one.
- If you find yourself in a heavy firefight, turn off ATT (Auto Turret Tracking) until you've selected a target. Otherwise, the ATT will waste precious seconds shifting your turret around.
- Until you know the nuances of your HERC, choose Auto Repair and learn from the computer.

EarthSiege 2

When MechWarrior 2 first came out, I figured any future attempts at Mech games would be like trying to redo the Sistine Chapel. MW2 was just too good. Any other Mech combat sims would have to be pathetic in comparison.

But then came EarthSiege 2.

This Windows 95 game is nearly as good as, and in many ways better than, MW2. In fact, if you were to ask 100 people which was better, you'd probably get a 50/50 split between the two. So what's so exciting about ES2? Well, first off, there's the graphics, which are simply incredible. Unlike MW2, the terrain is texture-mapped, so it looks more like real terrain.

Terra Nova's graphics may not be as sweet as those in the other two Mech games, but it compensates with great gameplay.

The MW2 add-on pack, Ghost Bear's Legacy, brings to life a new, ice-cool clan.

And EarthSiege's gameplay offers more than mere wanton destruction. To keep your HERC Mech in tip-top shape, you're going to have to salvage parts from the Cybrids you shoot. Waste them completely, and you'll soon be out of a working HERC. You also need recoverable Cybrids so you can further your learning of their Mech technology and help your race stand a fighting chance against these conscienceless automatons.

Storywise, EarthSiege is no MechWarrior. While MW2 has plenty of background info but a weak in-game story, ES2 has almost no story whatsoever. Basically, in the far future, machines have turned on man, growing extremely intelligent and just as belligerent. These Cybrids are out to rid the Earth of humanity, and it's up to you to stop the genocide.

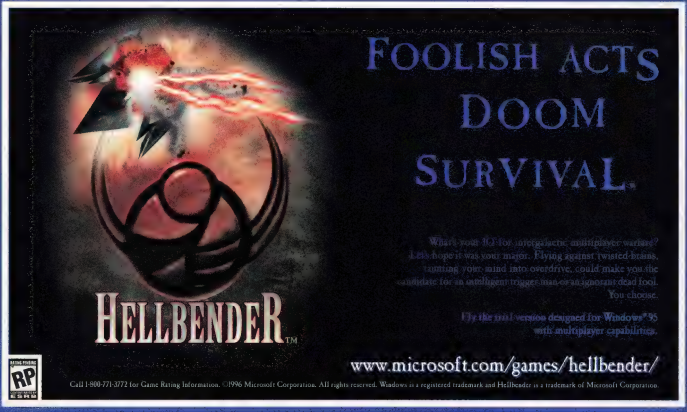
With more than 50 missions and 8 customizable HERCS—plus a Razor fighter that will put you in the air for a few missions—there's plenty here to like. But for some strange reason, there's no network or modem play. Also, MW2 has a few more goodies than ES2, such as jump jets, light and image enhancement, and a darker, moodier atmosphere. ES2's missions can be repetitive, and they're plagued with a few annoying bugs. However, if you enjoyed MechWarrior 2, you should definitely check out EarthSiege 2. (Sierra On-Line; 800-757-7707; www.sierra.com; Win 95 CD; $54.95)

Terra Nova: Strike Force Centauri

There's one more Mech game worthy of your consideration—Terra Nova: Strike Force Centauri. Compared to MW2 and ES2, Looking Glass' action game is so completely different—and yet strangely similar—that it's almost in a class all its own.

The plotline puts you in the role of Nikola Ap Io, field commander of the newly formed Strike Force Centauri. You and your team of heavily armed warriors (think *Robocop*) must stop pirate raids occurring in the Centauri

continued on page 41



Mech Your Calendar

Did you actually think that something as monstrously successful as MechWarrior 2 was going to go unnoticed by the rest of the industry? It seems like everyone and his brother has a Mech sim in their foundries. Here's a glimpse of what you can expect in the coming year.

The Condemned (Early '97)

Not a company to let a trend go unexploited, Microsoft has decided to do its own Mech sim, even though by the time it ships, it may be too late to offer much innovation.

In The Condemned, players compete in the highest-rated game show and sporting event in the universe, where Mech-

Microsoft's first foray into the Mech world will pit prisoners against each other in a bid for freedom.

equipped prison inmates duke it out for freedom in a nationally televised event. Microsoft promises the game will deliver hard-core action along with full-motion video. (Microsoft; 800-426-9400; www.microsoft.com; Win 95 CD; $44.95)

EarthSiege 3 (Early '97)

Details are sketchy, but the brainstorming for EarthSiege 3 has begun in earnest.

First and foremost on everybody's mind is the inclusion of network play, something that was sorely missing in ES2. You'll also be able to play for either the human side or the Cybrid side, which hasn't been tried before in the series. And there's the promise of more, redesigned robots, plus a new 3-D engine that will use 16-bit color and higher resolutions. (Sierra On-Line; 800-757-7707; www.sierra.com; Win 95 CD; $54.95)

G-Nome (Spring '97)

Not content to spend eternity known as the Monty Python company, 7th Level is coming out with its own Mech sim: G-Nome. One noticeable difference from the other Mech games will be the ability to leap from one Mech to another, controlling the one you're in. Traditional cartoon-style cel animation promises to make G-Nome's graphics smoother than usual, and support for 3-D accelerators should make things faster still. (7th Level; 800-884-8863; www.7thlevel.com; Win 95 CD; $49.99)

MechWarrior 2: Mercenaries (Fall '96)

Just because MicroProse has the rights to MechWarrior 3 (don't hold your breath—it hasn't started planning yet) doesn't mean that Activision can't come out with a sequel—or rather, a prequel—to its famous moneymaker.

Set 18 years before MW2, this new game finds you acting as a mercenary who puts more importance in money, power, and fame than in honor and loyalty (sounds like the NBA). Featuring at least 30 new Mechs and 30 new missions, Mercenaries will let you immerse yourself in the seedy world of combat for hire. Without the shiny, fully loaded BattleMechs used by the clans, you'll have to do your own resource management so you can repair and arm your ever-gritty Mech. Save your Comstar Bills and you can even hire additional pilots to help you out.

Mercenaries will be more than just an expansion pack to MW2; in fact, there are quite a few differences. First off, you'll be treated to new special effects, such as smoke trails and transitional video sequences, as well as MercNet, a multiplayer component that will allow head-to-head modem play and eight-person network play.

Also, the game will be nonlinear, so you won't be forced to repeat a failed mission until you finally succeed. Each mission will have several possible outcomes determined by your performance. Like EarthSiege 2, you'll even be able to salvage Mech parts from the battlefield to help save some dough. (Activision, 800-477-3650; Win 95 CD, DOS CD; $49.95)

Shattered Steel (Winter '96)

Interplay plans to throw its hat into the Mech ring with Shattered Steel, a game that promises unparalleled realism thanks to its Voxel-Graphics. Though not quite the same type of engine that was used for games like Novalogic's Comanche, the basic concept is the same: The graphics engine will allow the quick generation of a fully texture-mapped environment, creating terrain that should equal or surpass anything on the market.

You'll fight your way through 50 deadly robotic enemies scattered over 3 worlds, for a grand total of 70 (count 'em, 70!) nonlinear missions. And that's not all. Interplay also says the game will support 16-player network play along with head-to-head action. The company is even throwing in a scenario builder for unlimited missions.

If Shattered Steel delivers half of what it promises, it could be the Mech to beat. (Interplay; 800-468-3775; www.interplay.com; DOS CD; $39.95–$49.95)

Team 47 GoMan (Winter '96)

47-Tek is promising a fast-paced 3-D action game with Team 47 GoMan. Looking a lot like a Japanese robot flick, this Mech game has you battling giant monsters run amok. You'll get to climb buildings, skim oceans, and slide down snow-covered mountains to defend 18 mission targets. You'll do your dirty work in one of five sleek, highly acrobatic Mechs armed with the latest Photon and Plasma-based weapons. (47-Tek; 415-495-3900; Win 95 CD; not yet priced)

Climb buildings and skim oceans while defending 18 mission targets in Team 47 GoMan.

Some 47 GoMan will be more like a Japanese monster movie than a challenger to MW2.

Smooth graphics and special portals that carry Mechs onto the battlefield are some of G-Nome's highlights.

continued from page 39

system. Unlike MW2 and EarthSiege 2, Terra Nova strives more for realism than twitch-and-jerk combat. By combining parts of MechWarrior 2 and Wing Commander IV with a dash of Command & Conquer, Looking Glass serves up a surprisingly good combination of action and strategy.

One of the main differences is that instead of 100-ton behemoths, you must command life-sized armored soldiers. You'll sneak through gullies, leap off cliffs, and even swim through rivers to gain an advantage over your enemy. While you could certainly use the terrain to your benefit in MW2 and ES2, it's an absolute necessity here.

One note of warning: If you load up Terra Nova expecting the same high-res world of EarthSiege, you'll be in for quite a shock. The highest res possible is only 320-by-400. Like me, you'll probably gripe about it initially, but once you get a feel for the great gameplay, graphics become secondary.

Another difference in Terra Nova is that you won't be getting into any point-blank slugfests with enemy soldiers. As in real life, if you find yourself that close to the enemy, you'll be quickly kissing your rear-end goodbye. You'll have to shoot at your enemy from quite a distance, which could be a real disappointment for the Duke Nukem crowd.

Still, if you prefer a little more strategy in your action, and want to feel that adrenaline pumping as you dodge enemy laser blasts, you'll want to check out Terra Nova. (Looking Glass Technologies; 800-874-4607; www.iglass.com; DOS CD; $49.95) ■

Terra Nova

- When outfitting your unit for a heavy assault, try to limit the use of railguns to your most experienced soldiers. Novice squadmates tend to use them at the most inopportune times.
- Make sure you order your squadmates to hold their position when scouting. You don't want anyone blowing their cover.
- Whenever possible, use your PBA's built-in drones to find potential weak spots in the enemy's defenses.

Your Take: Mech Games

With this issue, we introduce our new PC Games Reader Panel. Generally, you hear what we have to say; now it's your turn to tell us what gamers think.

When it comes to Mech games, you agree that MechWarrior 2 is definitely the best game to date. As reader Mark Nolan put it, "MechWarrior still rules!" Why? You like its great graphics and variable missions. Terra Nova was your second favorite, mostly because it's a little different than MechWarrior and EarthSiege. In the words of David Moore: "Even though it's a Mech game, it doesn't 'feel' like a Mech game. It has gorgeous graphics, even if they are a bit low-res. The action is solid, and you're able to customize your battle suit enough to keep the game from getting dull."

And you had plenty to say about what matters most and what you'd like to see in the slew of future Mech games. One thing you'd really like are missions that can be played in a more random fashion, and don't have a set time limit. Joao Paulo Bezerra De Menezes said it best: "Did George Bush hold a clock over Norman Schwartzkoff's head during the Gulf War? I think not!"

—Christine Grech Wendin

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Build Your Own Duke LEVELS!

We go straight to the source and recruit Apogee's own Duke Nukem 3D Levelord to show you how.

It ain't easy being a Levelord, but it is fun. After all, what could be more amusing than creating your own little piece of perdition, and then sharing it with others? Designing game levels involves a fair amount of work, though, so be ready to invest some time if you're serious. Allen Blum and I spent more than three man-years just to bring you the 30 levels included in Duke Nukem 3D.

That shouldn't discourage you. Once you have a basic understanding of Duke's BUILD engine and a good theme for your level, it won't take long to flesh out a rewarding 3-D realm. A good two-player Dukematch level—say, the size of Episode 1, Level 1 (E1L1), "Hollywood Holocaust"—can be completed in roughly 40 to 80 hours. A solid single-player level (the size of E1L5, "The Abyss") can take as long as 200 to 300 hours.

Got Level: Tips and Pitfalls

Before we get into anything else, I should tell you that frame rate is the most important factor in a level. It'll be the most important thing to the player, and the first forgotten by you, the designer. *Frame rate* is the speed at which the player's computer can display the sequence of game frames, similar to a movie. If your level is too slow (15 frames per second is the absolute minimum; at least 24 is recommended), people will *not* play it, and your work is for naught. Make your scenes cool, but keep them simple enough to sustain a good frame rate. A level designer's ultimate goal is efficient elegance.

You should also consider your target audience. A good multiplayer level is very different than a good single-player one. Decide which audience you want to entertain before you start; it will save a lot of time toward the end of the level's creation.

As a level designer, you're both an artist and an engineer. Building levels is a very creative endeavor, and you want to push the envelope whenever you can. At the same time, however, there are a lot of rules and restrictions to keep in mind. Think "cool but controlled." For example, use BUILD's art file in "sets," not randomly, and don't use too many different tiles in any one level. If your target is singleplay, make sure your level has a well-thought-out critical path that lifts the player along a crescendo of action before delivering him to the exit. If you're going for multiplay excitement, try to provide a good playing field—one with quick access to the entire level so that players can find each other quickly.

Test often and save your work *frequently*! Build your level in small, manageable pieces so that when something goes wrong—as it will—you won't have far to backtrack as you're recovering. It's a good idea to save and exit BUILD every 15 to 30 minutes and copy

By The Levelord

your level to an incremental backup (C:\DUKE3D\COPY COOL.MAP COOL.001 the first time, COOL.002 the second, etc.). By the time I've finished a level, I'm usually at backup number 300-plus.

Don't be afraid to experiment, but expect lots of frustration when the engine won't do what you want it to do. Your imagination will often take you farther than the BUILD engine can follow. When you want to do something new in a level, look at our levels, find an example, and dissect it. Allen and I have a sample of just about everything you can do with BUILD, and if we don't, then it probably can't be done. But you can always try.

Getting Started

Before you begin, you'll need to copy the contents of the directory \GOODIES\BUILD on your Duke Nukem CD to the Duke Nukem directory on your hard drive (e.g., COPY X:\GOODIES\BUILD*.* C:\DUKE3D). Then all you have to do is go to your hard drive's DUKE 3D directory and type BUILD <level name>.

Please, please, please read through the BUILDHLP program that comes with the BUILD goodies. It has all the information you'll ever need for reference (key commands, sector effector lists, etc.). I'm going to assume that you've read at least the first few screens and that you've got a basic understanding of BUILD.

Allen also added a trio of great online help screens within BUILD itself. If you hit F5, you'll get a complete inventory of all the items and bad guys in the current map. This inventory is very helpful for getting a quick feel for the amount of health and ammo in a level, and for making sure there's at least one of each desired weapon. Hitting F6 will display a complete list of all sector effectors. F7 will display a list of all the sector tags.

You really don't need these keys at first, but hopefully, you will soon.

Basic Concepts

Now that BUILD is loaded, let's design our first functional structure. Having read the first few screens of BUILDHLP, construct a simple level of just one room.

This is an excellent time to play with the wall, floor, and ceiling textures. Raise and lower the floors and ceilings. It's also a good time to scan the entire art file so you'll know what's available later.

The Basic Door

It's always best to start with the simplest elements and build toward the more complicated ones. The easiest functioning structure to make is a basic door that opens straight up into the ceiling. Most of the things you will learn while constructing this first, simple door will carry over to almost all other action-oriented events in Duke (other types of doors, elevators, etc.). In the same manner, you can add sounds to just about any action, control the speed of these actions, make them auto-close, add switches to them, and Access Card–lock them.

Let's put a basic door (up-opening) in a hallway that extends off the side of our first room. Once the hallway is added, the first thing we'll need to do is cut the sector that will become the door. Make a slim sector by inserting two vertices on either side of the hallway just inside its entrance. Connect the two new vertices, making a new, slim sector. Do this again a bit further into the hallway.

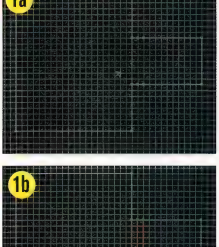
FIGURE 1a: Shows 2-D hallway with four new vertices.
FIGURE 1b: Shows 2-D hallway with new door sector.
FIGURE 1c: Shows 2-D door with sector tagged.

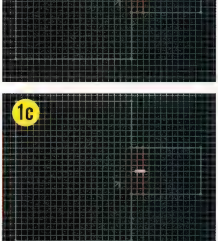
This new sector will become a door once we give it a Sector Low Tag of 20. You can assign a low tag to a sector by pointing to it (in 2-D mode) and hitting T. In the game, the door will consider itself "closed" by moving its ceiling to its floor. Likewise, it will consider itself "open" by finding the next-lowest ceiling above its own floor and moving there.

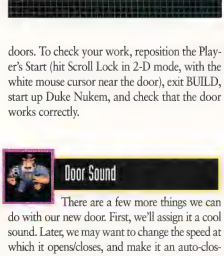
In most cases, you will want a door to be closed when the player first encounters it. You can close the door by going into 3-D mode, pointing at the ceiling of the door sector, holding down the left mouse button, and hitting Page Down until the door's ceiling is lowered to the floor. If you need to re-open the door later, perhaps to re-tile the slider and door's ceiling/floor, go into 3-D mode and go under the door. The screen will look funky because the floor and ceiling have the same height and there is no "space" for you. That's okay—just point to the top half of the screen and hit the Page Up key.

Related to moving the door up and down: If you notice that the door's tile does not move up and down as you're hitting Page Up and Page Down, then the tile is probably oriented to the ceiling. To orient it to the floor for proper operation, go to 3-D mode, point at the door's tile, and hit O. Now move the door up and down, noticing that its tile moves with it.

You have just constructed the simplest of







doors. To check your work, reposition the Player's Start (hit Scroll Lock in 2-D mode, with the white mouse cursor near the door), exit BUILD, start up Duke Nukem, and check that the door works correctly.

Door Sound

There are a few more things we can do with our new door. First, we'll assign it a cool sound. Later, we may want to change the speed at which it opens/closes, and make it an auto-closing door. We can also make it switch-operational, and even key-lock it.

To give the door a Duke-worthy sound, go back into BUILD and into 2-D mode. Resize the grid (hit G) until the grid size allows an intersection of grid lines to fall within the door's sector. Point at this intersection and hit S to insert a sprite within the door. The sprite we need is called a Music and Sound Effects sprite (MUSICANDSFX), but the one you just placed will prob-

IN THE FUTURE, THE SPORTS PAGE HAS AN OBITUARY SECTION

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ably be some other sprite. Change the sprite by entering 3-D mode, pointing at it, and hitting V.

The first screen you'll see is that of all the sprites you've used so far in your map.

Once your level is closer to completion, this first tile screen will be cool, because inevitably, the tile you want will have already been used. Right now, though, this level is new, so what we want isn't here. Hit V again to get to the entire art file. The Sound Effect sprite will be near the top of the tiles (tile #5). Position the white rectangle over the Sound Effect sprite and hit Enter.

You can assign the specific sound that this Sound Effect sprite will play by giving it a Sprite Low Tag that equals the sound number. The Sprite High Tag must be zero, so leave it alone! Assign the sound number to the Sprite Low Tag by pointing at the sprite in 2-D mode and pressing Alt-T.

The list of sound numbers can be found in the USER.CON file, and you are invited to play with all of them. In this case, though, let's go ahead and give it sound #259. Again, let's test what we've done before proceeding. Exit BUILD, load your level map, and make sure that you hear the correct sound.

Door Speed

The next thing we want to do with the door is alter how fast it opens and closes. Sometimes we want a door to open/close very fast or very slow. We also want the door's action to match its sound as closely as possible.

Altering the door's speed is similar to adding a Sound Effect sprite. Resize the 2-D mode grid so a grid intersection lies within the door. Place a sprite within the door and go to 3-D mode. This time, we want a Speed sprite. The Speed sprite is also located near the top of the tiles (tile #10).

FIGURE 2: Shows 2-D door sector with Sound sprite and Speed sprite.

Assign the Speed sprite's low tag a value of 88. The exact speed of the door depends on what you want it to do. Usually, you'll want to match the speed of the door with its sound. For now, though, a standard-size door like ours (16 Page Ups from floor to ceiling) should be set at a speed of about 88. Double-sized doors (32 Page Ups) would be 176. Play around with different speeds to find out what works for you.

Auto-Closing Doors

Many of Duke's doors are designed to auto-close. A door, after all, is a means of controlling access, and we often want to maintain this control after the player's first encounter. As your levels get more complicated, an auto-closing door can obstruct views that would otherwise kill the frame rate.

To make a door an auto-closer, we will need to insert our first Sector Effector. Whoa! Here we go, our first Sector Effector.

Again, insert a sprite within your door's sector while in 2-D mode. This time, make it a Sector Effector (tile #1). Assign the Sector Effector to auto-close by giving its low tag a value of 10. We also need to tell the door how long to wait until it closes (in other words, provide a delay time). This is done with the Sector Effector's high tag. Give it a number that's similar to the one you assigned the Speed sprite's time, only this number will represent the amount of time that the door stays open. Now you're ready to test and experiment.

Switches

You will want to make some of your doors switch-operational, so they can be controlled from afar. Adding a switch to your door involves adding two more sprites to your level: an Activator sprite and the Switch sprite itself. The Activator is simple enough, but the Switch will be a bit more complicated than just adding another sprite.

Insert an Activator sprite within the door's sector, just as you did the Sound Effect, Speed, and auto-close Sector Effector sprites. This time, change the new sprite to the Activator sprite (tile #2) and assign its low tag a linking number. This linking number can be randomly chosen, and it will be used to associate the door's activator with a particular switch or switches.

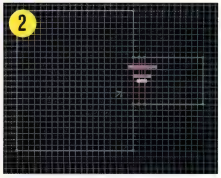
Now we need to make a switch for the door. You may want to put a switch on each side of the door, or even put additional switches elsewhere in your level, but for now, let's just make one.

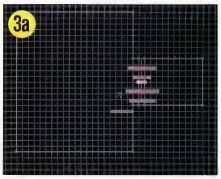
FIGURE 3a: Shows 2-D of switch and activator.

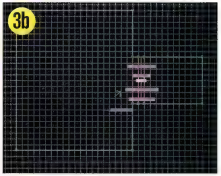
FIGURE 3b: Shows 2-D of Switch sprite's tail orientation.

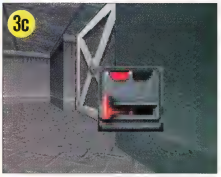
FIGURE 3c: Shows 3-D of non-rotated Switch sprite.

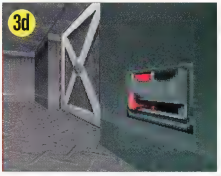
FIGURE 3d: Shows 3-D of rotated switch against wall and raised.











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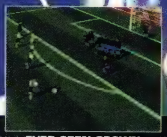

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Place a sprite near the right side of the door. There are a few different graphical types of switches; let's use the Slot Door Switch (tile #132). Give the low tag of the switch the same value as the activator. The only thing left to do is to make the switch a "rotated" sprite so it will lie flat on the wall.

Rotated Sprites

You've noticed by now that most sprites you see in the game will rotate with you as you walk a circle around them. But we want our switch to lie flat against the wall. To do this, go to 2-D mode and use the < and > keys to orient the Switch sprite so its little tail is pointing away from the wall. Go back to 3-D mode, point at the sprite, and hit R. Notice that the Switch sprite will no longer rotate. Finally, while still pointing at it, hit the O key to push it against the wall. Cool, eh? You're now ready to test your first switch-operated door. Please do.

Access Switches

Adding an access card to your door is easy now that you have a switch assigned to it. All we need to do is replace the Switch sprite with the Access Switch sprite, replace the Activator sprite with an Activator-Locked sprite, and adjust the Access Switch sprite's palette to reflect its particular key color (blue, red, or yellow).

Change the Switch sprite to an Access Switch sprite (tile #130) by pointing at it in 3-D mode and hitting V. (You know what to do from here.) Change the Activator sprite (you'll need to temporarily move it out from underneath the door in 2-D mode) to an Activator-Locked sprite (tile #4). The low tags of the Access Switch sprite and the Activator-Locked sprite can keep the values from the original switch/activator.

Palette-Shifting Sprites

This first access switch can be blue, the default, but let's make it the red just for practice. Do this by pointing at the Access Switch sprite in 3-D mode and hitting Alt-P. Select palette #21, which will change the sprite's blue-colored pixels to red.

You'll need to place an Access Card sprite; for now, we'll just put one close to the door for easy testing. Place a sprite near, but not too near, to the door and change it to an access card (tile #60). Give the access card the same palette as the access switch and you're ready to test your first access-switch door.

Simple Elevator

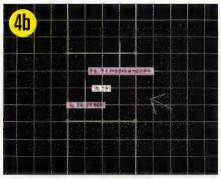
Building an elevator repeats most of the steps from building a basic door. The only real difference is the creation of the elevator's sector and its neighboring sectors. You also need to decide whether the elevator starts in a raised or lowered position. Two sets of Sector Low Tags control this.

FIGURE 4a: Shows 3-D of elevator structure.
FIGURE 4b: Shows 2-D of elevator with Speed and Sound sprites.

The simplest elevator to make is one that is set in one of the walls of our main room. We'll use the sector that you joined to your main room earlier. Hopefully, it's about the size of an elevator platform. If it's not, feel free to change its size in 2-D mode.

On the opposite side of the adjoining room, add another adjoining sector. Make this new sector as big as the main room. Go into 3-D mode and raise the ceiling of the new sector by about 16 Page Ups. Then raise the floor the same amount.

Go back to 2-D mode and assign the value 17 to the elevator sector's low tag. That's it; that's the elevator. Check it in Duke by entering the elevator and pressing the space bar. This will be a regular elevator, as opposed to a platform elevator, and the ceiling will move with the floor.

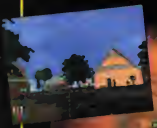


You can change the textures of the elevator, give it a sound, change its speed, and add switches in the same ways you enhanced the door. When giving an elevator a sound, be sure to give it a sound value for both the low tag and the high tag: It will play one sound when going up and the other while going down. The two standard elevator sounds are #73 and #71 (high and low tag).

Transporters

Transporters are very simple. All you need to do is create two transporter sectors, each with a transporter Sector Effector in it. Usually the sectors will be player-sized, but you can place two transporter Sector Effectors where you want the player to teleport from/to if you want; any transporter structure is purely for visual effect.

On August 30th...



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Actual IBM screens shown

Bad dog, don't cast that spell!

THE ELDER SCROLLS

Chapter Two

BETHESDA SOFTWORKS

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Assign the Sector Effectors' low tags a value of 7. Assign their high tags any equal values, as you did with the activator/switch linkage. Transporters always work in pairs, but you're welcome to play with other combinations if you feel brave.

Usually, you'll want to put the transporter Sector Effectors directly on the floor where you want the player to teleport from/to. Players will teleport anytime they enter this sector, whether on the ground, jumping over, or whatever. If you want to make players teleport only when they are at the teleporter Sector Effector's exact position, raise it above the floor as high as you want the event to happen. This can be great for teleporting players as they plummet down a hole in the floor.

Please don't be afraid to play with transporters. Many of BUILD's tricks are pulled off using transporters.

Ambient Sounds

One of the best ways to affect a player is with sounds. You already know how to make actions in Duke Nukem cause sounds. So let's add an ambient sound.

Ambient sounds use the same Sound Effect sprite that we used in our door. They are distinguished by giving their high tags a value. This value tells the game how far away the sound can be heard. A rough scaling is one large grid square (in 2-D mode) equals a bit more than 1,000. Experiment, please, and don't forget the list of Duke sounds in USER.CON.

For an added effect, you can make an ambient sound audible only when the player enters a sector. This is done differently than normal ambient sounds. If you give a sector a low tag of 10,000 plus the sound number, the game will play that sound each time the player enters the sector. For instance, if you want the player to hear sound #2.56, give the sector a low tag of 102.56.

Dukematch Only

Often, you'll want to put sprites and things in your level that are available only in multiplayer Dukematches. Weapons and ammo are good examples; you may want to add extra weapons/goodies for multiplayer games. You can also add structures like elevators and transporters.

Sprites are designed for multiplay only by shifting their palette to blue (palette #1). As with the key cards mentioned earlier, point at the sprite in 3-D mode and hit Alt-P.

You can make an elevator or transporter multiplay-only with a little extra work. Simply put a switch-operated door in front of the structure (the structure will need to be inset into a wall) and palette-shift the door's switch.

Don't Give Up

With these structures and controls, you should be able to create some cool levels for both single-player and multiplayer Duke. And remember, playing your own levels gives you a built-in advantage. So come get some! ■

BUILDing Blocks

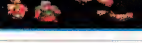
While working with the BUILD engine, you'll encounter some new terminology. Here's what every wannabe Levelord should know:

Vertices: In 2-D mode, the points where two or more walls meet. For example, the corner of a room.

Walls: In 2-D mode, the lines that define a sector. The simplest wall is made of two vertices.

Sectors: The actual rooms in the game. The simplest sector consists of three walls and three vertices.

Textures/Tiles: Textures, or tiles, as they're often called, are used to give walls, floors, and ceilings their appearance. Most of the art in BUILD is textures; the rest is sprites (see below).



Sprites: The elements used for characters, weapons, ammo, switches, ornaments, and just about anything that's not a wall, floor, or ceiling.

Sector Effectors: Special sprites that are used to make actions happen, such as movement and lighting effects. The type of action is identified by a Sector Effector's low tag, while linking actions to particular events or sectors is done via the high tag.

Tags: These identify effects, and link effects to certain sectors. There are two types of tags: low and high. Low tags usually identify an effect, such as raising the floor or activating a door. High tags are usually used to link the effect of the low tag to another sprite, or to a sector.

LEVELORDOLOGY

The Levelord was born Richard Gray in New Haven, Conn., on Nov. 15, 1957, and grew up in Connecticut and Pennsylvania. After a stint in the Navy, he moved to Los Angeles on a whim. He earned a technical degree for business-oriented programming and worked for three years at Kirkhill Rubber Company.

His degree in computer engineering took a year of night school, two years of community college, and four-years-that-seemed-like-24 at UCLA. A year of studying graduate computer graphics at NYU led to more jobs in business computing. After getting hooked on that other D game, the Levelord did some levels with DEU, and caught the eye of Apogee. Following some contract work, he came to beautiful Texas in March 1995. That's where they'll find him when it's all over.

A special thanks to Allen Blum III for letting me do my thing in his sandbox; he is a god among us lowly lords. A bow is also given to the true powers-that-be, Scott Miller and George Broussard, who let me become an Apostle of Apogee to begin with. Finally, of course, let our hats be lowered to the entire Duke Nukem 3D team: Greg Malone, Todd Replogle, Doug Wood, Lee Jackson, Stephen Hornback, Jim Dose, Dirk Jones, James Storey, David Demaret, Mark Ochtermann, and Chuck Jones. Oh, and some guy named Ken Silverman, our Wizard of Great Providence.

—RG

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GUIDED TOUR

TOONSTRUCK

By Corey Cohen

Drew Blanc: a man in a creative void. With the right encouragement, he'll drive his frustration into the ground.

You begin the game in the home of Bricabrac. Modeled after 007's Q, he'll give you a rundown of your objectives.

First, it was *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*. Then it was *Cool World*. Now, those crazy Toons have another date with us real folk. Only this time, the action's coming straight to your PC—and *you're* in control.

Toonstruck, a hilarious new adventure from Virgin Interactive, offers players the chance to bend their brains and leap into an animated adventure that has all the elements of a great game: beautiful graphics, challenging puzzles, outrageous humor, and good ol' star power.

The story by producer David Bishop and lead designer Richard Hare is actually quite simple: While working on the Fluffy Fluffy Bun Bun Show, animator Drew Blanc (played by Christopher Lloyd of *Taxi* and *Back to the Future* fame) is told he must develop a new show, Fluffy and Friends. Stressed beyond belief, Drew is facing a major case of creative block when, in a freak accident, he's yanked into a world of Toons.

And what a world it is. Joined by Flux Wildly, Drew's spastic, sarcastic sidekick, players will wander a landscape of incredible beauty and

Ah, the Carecrow. So fashion-conscious. He's a friendly fellow—until he's "Malevolated."

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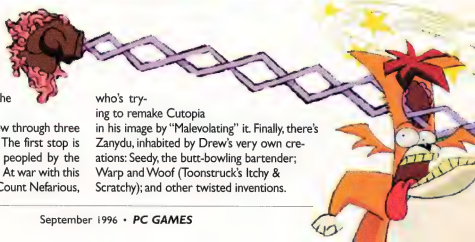
WHEN CARTOONIST DREW BLANC IS SUCKED INTO AN ANIMATED WORLD OF HIS OWN CREATION, THE FUN'S JUST BEGINNING. JOIN US AS WE EXPLORE THE TWISTED REALMS OF THIS ADULT CARTOON ADVENTURE.

The Bakery is run by three frogs. The third one's in Nefarious' castle—and it's your job to rescue him.

Top: As you can see, Marge the cow has a special relationship with the Churnatron. Left: The barn's been Malevolated! Notice the changes in the Churnatron, Marge, the sheep, and the plant food. And where's Elmer?

detail. Using a mix of traditional character animation, more than 100 hand-painted backgrounds, digital animation, and green-screen compositing (of Lloyd), Toonstruck offers up a gorgeous setting ripe for exploration. "We wanted every location to be worthy of being a screenshot on the back of the box," says Bishop, and it shows.

Over the course of the game, you will guide Drew through three bizarre kingdoms while solving roughly 50 puzzles. The first stop is Cutopia, ruled by the benevolent King Hugh and peopled by the cute, cookie-cutter characters from the Fluffy show. At war with this "paradise" is the Malevolands, the realm of the evil Count Nefarious, who's trying to remake Cutopia in his image by "Malevolating" it. Finally, there's Zanydu, inhabited by Drew's very own creations: Seedy, the butt-bowling bartender; Warp and Woof (Toonstruck's Itchy & Scratchy); and other twisted inventions.



It's Zanydu, the home of Warp, Woof, and the rest of Drew's creations. Drew uses a black hole to get to the Nexus, where he can access one of three remote locations.

Warp and Woof, owners of Wacme Concepts, like to beat on each other. They'll be glad to show you their exploding cigars, acid spray, and other instruments of choice.

Nefarious' "toymaker" is a nasty fellow—and he doesn't take kindly to intruders.

To break up the action, the game features more than an hour (50,000 frames) of Toon flicks—animated shorts showing various events in the kingdoms. Whether they're a reward for solving a puzzle or a break in the action, many of these scenes are hilarious cartoon carnage, pure and simple: the snotty servant being humiliated; Warp and Woof brutalizing each other; a mouse getting whacked by a hammer.

Much of the game contains a warped sense of humor that's definitely for the older crowd. If it's not a demented clown torturing helpless balloon animals, it's a cow clad in studded black leather and strapped to the Wheel-o'-Luv. If you like the "grown-up cartoons"—*The Simpsons, Beavis and Butt-head,* and others—Toonstuck will be right up your alley.

Fans of "Hollywood games" will be pleased to know that Lloyd isn't the only big-name talent. Toonstruck features the voices of Dan Castallanetta (TV's Homer Simpson), Tim Curry (*The Rocky Horror Picture Show*), David Ogden Stiers (*M*A*S*H*), and Dom DeLuise (*Fatso*). Even the music—part whimsical, part ominous, with bits licensed from *Ren & Stimpy*—will set the mood for an animation extravaganza.

"Most adventure games fall into one of two categories: the fantasy type, like Lord of the Rings, or the real-life, Police Quest variety," says Bishop. "We wanted to do something with universal appeal. *Everyone* loves cartoons."

Above all, though, is the gaming experience. Is Toonstruck up to the

Whoa! From the edge of the Malevolands, you see the castle of Count Nefarious. Too bad you've gotta go there...

The first floor of the castle. Click on the clown nose, and the camera will zoom in for a puzzle.

While in Zanydu, stop off for a work-out in Jim's Gym. You never know when you'll need some muscle power.

Solve the puzzle and you'll meet Spike, a serious psycho. His sole source of pleasure is building balloon sculptures and then popping 'em.

Ms. Fortune is Nefarious' mystic soothsayer. Watch out, or she'll hypnotize you.

You've got to respect Seedy—how many guys can bowl with their butt? To get on his good side, insult him.

challenge? (It better be—it's about a year late.) It certainly is, says Bishop, who estimates it will take "seasoned gamers" about 20 hours to complete the game. "For anybody else, it'll take quite a bit longer to play through, hear all the dialogue, see all the worlds."

To get a sneak peak at Toonstruck's amazing worlds and meet some of the bizarre characters within, take our exclusive Guided Tour. Sit back—and get Toonstruck. (Virgin Interactive Entertainment; 800-874-4607; www.vie.com; price not available; game ships in November.)

Feudal strategy meets Warcraft

PREVIEW!

Lords of the Realm II

By Rob Smith

Look familiar? Don't worry, there aren't any Orcs around here.

The life of the medieval lord in 12th-century England certainly had its moments of interest and intrigue—none more so than when the king took it upon himself to die in an untimely manner, leaving no heir and a gaping void in the balance of power. Cue to a struggle between the remaining five lords, who, unable to reach any consensus about a successor, declare war.

Fortunately, none of the lords in Lords of the Realm II is prepared for battle, so there's time to raise armies, rally troops, construct defenses, and, most importantly, develop an economy sufficient to support a protracted campaign.

Those familiar with the first Lords of the Realm will be pleased to hear that the enhancements and developments in this sequel have been very carefully thought out and constructed. A major new feature is the addition of real-time combat modes, which unashamedly duplicates popular games such as Command & Conquer and Warcraft II. But economic strategy, planning, and implementation are still at the heart of this sim.

An overhaul of the control interface has drastically improved the clunky, multi-layered confusion that caused some problems in the original, allowing for smoother organization of commands. Apart from speed increases, Lords II is also more visually appealing, with little animations and backdrops that highlight each area needing attention. There are still plenty of numbers to crunch as you juggle the technicalities of balancing army development, agriculture, forestry, and mining.

Siege warfare adds a new, enterprising element to the battle scenes.

One day, son, this will all be yours...

Fighting is always fun, and bloodfests take on a more prominent role in Lords II. By splitting the country into fewer counties than the original contained, the onset of conflict comes more quickly. Combat strategy is also enhanced with the inclusion of siege weapons such as battering rams and catapults, as well as six unit types. Thus, while battles still take place in the open fields of the countryside, castles now play a more important role. The top-down view of combat, real-time involvement in the vein of Warcraft, and the array of major siege weaponry should make these conflicts great fun—especially head to head.

In keeping with the current vogue, Impressions has made multiplayer support an integral part of enhancing long-term replayability. Separate scenarios, some designed specifically with multiplayer contests in mind, should also add to the mayhem.

While combat has received a significant overhaul, the structure and artificial intelligence of the economics management haven't been overlooked. Development of the county towns, deployment of serfs, and the construction of a sound economy are at the root of a successful kingdom. Cash is vital to long-term success, and trading with passing merchants over time can prove a useful, though potentially risky, method of achieving this goal.

Lords of the Realm II
Sierra On-Line
800-757-7707
www.sierra.com
254

Developer: Impressions
Platform: Win 95/Win CD
Available: October

Where many sequels can simply be billed as "more of the same," Lords of the Realm II seems to have taken some of the criticisms of the first installment to heart, fixing those glitches and adding a number of features that cater to—and exceed—the current status quo. In fact, this unique combination of economic management and medieval warfare could ultimately give Lords II its own popular niche.

TOTALLY IMMERSE YOURSELF in a realistic state of the art 3D environment. Rotate your opponent's across towering bridges and to pooling rainbows, then plunge headlong into deep murky waters below. Includes optional "Shadow" [illegible] modes.
WHEN THINGS GET YOUR ENEMIES with your rotary-shaped sword, flesh-ripping throwing stars, a crossbow with explosive-tipped bolts, a fully automatic [illegible] grenades, and a wide assortment of even deadlier magic spells and special effects.
MUCH [illegible] MOVEMENT in you can, jump, crawl, climb, swim, [illegible] your way against an onslaught of [illegible] enemies [illegible] on your destruction.
TAKE THE CHALLENGE and fight for your life as you show your skills playing 2 players via modem or up to 8 players by network. Also, start your own ninja clan and play in cooperative matches against the ancient goat.
"Detail is everywhere. No other game has Shadow Warrior's sweep and splendor. This is going to be an epic."
— Electronic Entertainment
"Bar none, the BUILD engine is one of the finest engines to sculpt a world in, as it allows for incredible special effects and a sheering frame rate."
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Also Supports
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Break out the 8-track and burn rubber

Interstate 76

By Steve Klett

You'll play most of the game from this impressive in-the-driver's-seat view.

Do you long for the '70s? Do you have a hankering to throw on some bellbottoms, grow some long, bushy sideburns or an outta-control 'fro, and roll on down the highway in your Barracuda, cranking some Grand Funk Railroad on that old 8-track?

If so, you'll want to check out Activision's upcoming Interstate 76—it has all of these elements, plus an original but authentic '70s soundtrack. Even if you detest all these things—and who can blame you if you do?—you'll want to check out this game.

Why? Because these features are mere window dressing in a game that's really based on sleek versions of classic 1970s muscle cars that are armed to the teeth and looking for trouble. Brought to you by the same design team responsible for MechWarrior 2 (and based loosely on Mech's game engine), I-76's gameplay potential is positively groovy.

The story is worthy of a *Mad Max* movie script. I-76 is set in the American Midwest in an alternative 1970s universe where the gas crunch has hit the U.S. economy much harder than expected. Society hasn't crumbled, but it's on extremely shaky ground.

The government no longer has the resources to control everyone. A subculture of "automercenaries"—psycho criminals who mount weapons on their cars and commit crimes—and "autovigilantes"—those decent-minded individuals who arm their cars and try to stop them—has emerged.

You are Groove Champion, an autovigilante who's fighting to avenge the death of his sister Jade. You'll uncover all the facts surrounding her death as you play through approximately 25 missions, but here are the basics: Jade was murdered after she stumbled onto arch-villain Antonio Malachio's plans to plunge the U.S. economy into chaos by destroying its largest remaining oil reserve in Western Texas. Malachio's not acting entirely alone: OPEC appears to have had a hand in the evil doings as well.

So, with the aid of Taurus—your wingman and mentor, and Jade's former partner—you embark on a crusade to avenge your sister and save the U.S. economy in the process. (Or is it the other way around? You make the call.)

It's a respectable story, to say the least, one that unfolds in glorious detail through the course of more than 20 computer-generated cut scenes. Who cares about cut scenes, you say? Well, these aren't your average cut scenes. They're nothing like Mech 2's eye-popping high-tech intro, which, while impressive, was entirely non-representative of the game's actual content.

No need to keep both hands on the wheel.

Groove and Taurus race through the back streets.

This time, the design team decided to go a different route and make I-76's cut scenes match the gameplay graphics as closely as possible. There's no full-motion video here; it's all computer-generated art that mirrors the level you'll find in the actual game.

"We're experimenting artistically to provide a seamless experience, so the [player] never questions the level" of the cut scenes, says Zack Norman, lead game designer, who also wrote the script. "We're also going to make this sim look so bitchin' that it's unparalleled, and at the same time lower the animations to match," which should make transitioning between cut scene and game more seamless.

As a result, when your character steps out of a car in a cut scene, he will be a polygonal figure that is built much like the vehicles—it will all look natural. The cut scenes will also blend into the missions. The introductory sequence, for instance, has you peeling out of a parking lot onto a highway from a third-person perspective, which then cuts immediately into your first-person view from the driver's seat in the game, whereupon you're in control.

If our early looks were any indication, the in-game art should be stellar as well. I-76's environs are fully texture-mapped, with incredibly detailed cars replete with working shocks and independent suspensions. There will be 25 vehicles

Interstate 76
Activision
800-477-3650
www.activision.com

Platform: Win 95 CD
Available: November

in all, and each is a not-so-well-disguised variant of a real-life counterpart. (Activision didn't secure the licenses to use the car's real names, so there won't be a Corvette in the game, per se, but there will be a car with an uncanny resemblance.)

Of course, what good is a muscle car without a machine gun or two? You'll have a virtual arsenal of weapons, including such staples as machine guns, rocket launchers, and guided missiles. There are also some unique death-dealing instruments, such as a mechanism that drops cinder blocks in the path of oncoming cars and a fire dropper that spreads oil slicks and lights them on fire.

Sounds great, but how will the cars handle? It's tough to say until we get to play it, but I-76's physics model appears to have all the tools to make the game as realistic as possible. Skidding will be based on real-world equations, and your car will pitch when you brake and make sharp turns. Cars will jump, flip on their roofs, and explode, crash into buildings, and blow out tires, which will affect their handling significantly.

The cars will also perform differently on the various terrain—sand, brush, oil-coated asphalt, and other surfaces. This is important because it enhances realism when you do things like veer off a highway onto a rough dirt road. You can blaze your own trail and, in the process, change the gameplay dramatically.

Groove plays chicken with a Marx semi.

Looks like the semi lost that little game.

The artificial intelligence of the enemy vehicles looks to be as impressive as the physics. Enemy cars will adapt to your fighting style and employ tactics that correspond to their ordnance. For example, enemy cars with cinder-block droppers will try to cross in front of you, while those with twin forward-firing machine guns will try to get behind you. Your adversaries' cars will also register when they've been damaged, then alter their tactics to minimize vulnerability.

If that's not enough, I-76 will include multiplayer missions for up to eight players. These will come in automelee varieties (deathmatch free-for-alls) and cooperative missions in which one group of players must defend an object while another group tries to destroy it. (You'll also be able to go head to head with a friend via modem.) You can customize your cars with whatever weapons and art you'd like. But don't think you can just jump in the biggest, baddest car with the most weapons and rule. Players driving weaker cars will get a higher score for each kill they make.

"We've set out to make the definitive action-oriented driving game," says project director Sean Vesce. "And we think players will be pleased."

We can't wait to find out. I-76 will hit roads—er, shelves—near you next month.

I-76's cinematics impress artistically rather than technically.

Can you foil Malachio's plan to plunge the U.S. economy into chaos?

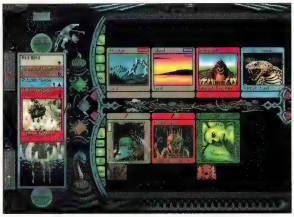
Groove hunts down a Courcheval Cameo in the heat of battle.

It's almost here. Really.

PREVIEW!

Magic: The Gathering

By Barry Brenesal



Play those mana cards out early so you can unleash your monstrous hordes.

Bigger than Wing Commander. Bigger than Doom. Bigger than Diablo. It's… it's…a computerized card game?

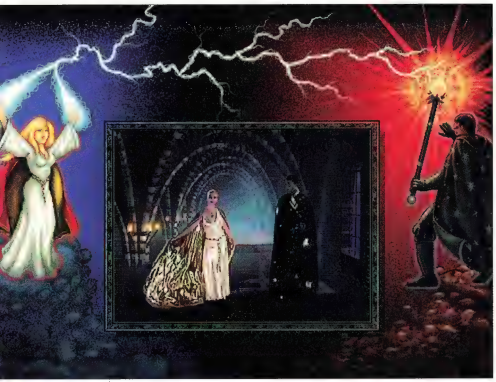
Yes, it's Magic: The Gathering—potentially the largest computerized gaming draw on the horizon this season. Never heard of it? That's not surprising. It would be easy for a computer gamer to overlook that Magic has been the world's top-selling card game for the last several years. In fact, it has literally revitalized an industry that was chugging along on poker, canasta, and touched-up photographs of baseball players.

The computerized Magic is both an RPG and a straightforward duel played between two powerful wizards: yourself and a computer opponent. In the dueling component, which is where this game will draw the close scrutiny of the card game fans, your forces consist of some of the 3,000 unique Magic cards produced during the last three years. They feature a variety of beautifully illustrated, distinctive spells, lands, and creatures that interact in a fantastical, pseudo-medieval landscape made up of five differently colored magics—each with its own benefits and drawbacks.

Players build decks of 40 to 60 cards based on one or two colors. Often, players will create many different "theme" decks to match their moods and foil their opponent's expected lines of development. Yes, it sounds complex, but the rules themselves aren't that tough. Like a Mozart piano sonata, the problem lies not in learning to play, but in playing well. Fortunately, there are several tools provided for that purpose.

One of them is the tutorial's live-action sequences, which feature a pair of exotically dressed wizards who lead you through the game's basics, including colors, deck building, and the elements of a typical duel "turn." In the pre-release version we played, the tutorial's graphics and special effects were quite good, though the acting (all performed by stage actors) was terrifyingly hammy.

Because the tutorial is also light on content. I recommend going straight from it to the excellent enclosed manual (yes, a genuine manual, not a two-page command summary). Then choose the Duel option for head-to-head combat and select Apprentice level. This should get you started on the right foot. Thankfully, Magic's in-game, context-sensitive help sets standards for accessibility, thoroughness, and clarity.



Costumed actors look, er, great as they introduce the game.

Magic: The Duels

The Duels are the core of Magic, and they're the main reason for the game's year-plus delay, which wins it the annual Stonekeep Award for the '95/'96 season. Why the wait? MicroProse needed the extra time to ensure that the artificial intelligence of your computer-driven opponent was up to snuff—there are no network or modem options yet, but more on that in a bit.

The computer opponent's cards are carefully laid out according to the strictest of rules. That's vital, because many players will have logged hundreds of hours playing the card game and would be able to spot any discrepancies in an instant. A given in most computer games, cheating in the computer's favor to compensate for poor AI would be virtually impossible to get away with in Magic.

Think about it. If your computer opponent placed four Prodigal Sorcerers out of 50 deck cards on the playing field in its first six moves,

The superb artwork that helped make the cards so popular is perfectly re-created in the game.

voices would be raised across the nation demanding the execution of MicroProse executives for Crimes Against Humanity.

So how does Magic's AI measure up? Very well, indeed. Well enough, in fact, that it's actually dumbed-down at lower skill levels. The AI enforces rules, evaluates standalone and combination card values, and applies any of several dozen computerized "personalities" to the result. (Some computerized personas are more aggressive, use certain colors, and prefer certain combinations.)

Visually speaking, MicroProse has been touting Magic's "dueling decks" interface at trade shows for the past nine months, and with good reason. The Super VGA artwork is gorgeous, especially at 1024-by-768 resolution. The cards themselves faithfully mirror the actual artwork and text of the originals. The options available from right-click menus are well-chosen and well-thought-out.

Magic: The RPG

Duels may be the core of this computerized Magic: The Gathering, but the enclosed RPG is the easiest way to become familiar with this game once you've absorbed the rules. It also presents computer gamers with a familiar genre, one in which a hero walks the landscape on quests, defeating smaller foes and gaining power for the Ultimate Challenge.

In Magic terms, the Ultimate Challenge is represented by five major wizards, one of each color, each of whom seeks to conquer the world of Shandalar. They'll go after small fry and attack one another's castles. A wizard wins by gaining five Mana Taps, which are displayed as tiny spheres swirling above his head in the Status screen. Your goal is to defeat these wizards' armies, piece by piece, and then vanquish each wizard individually in mortal combat. When all five wizards are gone, a new one will be born: you.

Victory is no easy task, for in place of personal statistics, the inhabitants of Shandalar all have collections of Magic cards. At the start, yours are pretty pathetic. You'll need to win many card duels to acquire the ante cards put up by your opponents. You then add these cards to the deck you use to fight.

Magic: The Gathering
MicroProse
800-879-7529
www.microprose.com

Platform: Win 95 CD
Available: Late September

Of course, there are quests to go on, and there are several tiers of difficulty. Time-based quests ("Deliver my message in three days to Whitecliff Tower, which is to the south") are perhaps the easiest, but they also allow the major wizards to martial their forces. In addition, you'll face wandering challengers created by the wizards; long, object-oriented quests in towers and dungeons; and finally, the castles of the wizards themselves.

Magic's RPG features an isometric view of your tiny player character, walking over plains, forests, swamps, and such, all in scattered, randomly placed patches that represent the differently colored magics. Movement animation is slow but detailed, the graphics are sharp, and the color palette bright and attractive. There is no animation in the terrain itself.

In the Works

The early beta we played lacked more than half-a-year's card releases, which will be included in an add-on pack. A network module, allowing players to connect via various Internet providers for duels, trades, and chats, was also missing. That's a big thing to leave out, as, after all, it's the social aspects of the game—playing against a scheming friend whose tricks you know, but who still manages to turn a new one now and then—that made the card game so popular. MicroProse says to expect networking capabilities in the add-on pack, perhaps in time for Christmas.

Careful construction of your deck from the card pool is vital to dueling sucess.

The absence of a network-ready Magic may turn off some folks, but I must confess, that won't be the case for me. As hard-core Magic fans, my wife and I were delighted with the product's Duel module. As computer RPGers, we were equally pleased with the RPG module, and spent many hours surveying its randomly generated worlds. Admirers of fantasy-based card games and role-playing computer games, take note: Magic: The Gathering is coming to serve your needs. Keep an eye out for it.

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Murphy is back at it

The Pandora Directive

By Rob Smith

Get too close to the truth and you may pay the price.

Tex Murphy returns to the interactive movie scene with an investigation into a massive government conspiracy involving the Mayan civilization and the Roswell incident.

For those unfamiliar with Tex (played once more by Access Software boss Chris Jones), he came to prominence in Under A Killing Moon as the Sam Spade–style PI working the streets of a post-apocalyptic San Francisco. The nuclear war that tore the city asunder contaminated the world, and only those fortunate enough to possess a particular gene formation were able to avoid mutation.

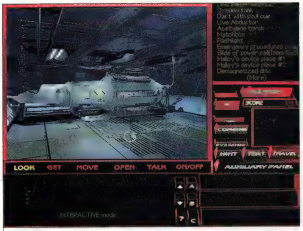
Now the year is 2043, one year after the events of Under A Killing Moon brought Tex into contact with the inhabitants of his neighborhood. Things haven't changed much—he's still broke, still lives in that apartment at the Ritz Hotel, still visits the stores of Chandler Ave., and still acts like the typical PI in a 1940s movie.

Resplendent in designer stubble, trenchcoat, and fedora, Tex really looks the part—all he needs is a job. Enter Gordon Fitzpatrick and a missing-persons case. Having settled on the usual $500-a-day fee (plus expenses), it's time to hit the streets on a journey that will span several days of searching and include no small amount of danger.

Chandler Ave. looks pretty much the same as it did in Under A Killing Moon. A couple of features have changed, such as the location of the mail box, but even that's explained in one of Tex's typical off-the-cuff remarks. Traffic has disappeared, though, as have the parking meters.

The investigation opens with the search for Thomas Malloy. Numerous other subplots crop up and intertwine to create one complicated situation.

After an encounter with a dodgy government agency, the infamous Roswell incident of 1947 and the supposed existence of aliens rears its head. Tex smells conspiracy, and life suddenly gets a whole lot tougher. How does a study of the ancient Mayan civilization fit into this? Where is Malloy? Who is the Black Arrow



This generator plays a crucial role in Tex's survival, so get it working.

The familiar facades of Chandler Ave.

Killer? Will Tex ever convince Chelsee that he's really a nice guy? And why is the game called The Pandora Directive? These are just some of the questions the cunning detective needs to answer.

Meeting people and digging up information is what the PI game is all about. There are three possible responses in each part of conversations you'll have with the game's myriad characters, and each response follows a separate path through the story. If friendliness is not your style, adopt a more neutral approach, or simply go for the hard-nosed, aggressive banter, and try to tough the information out of people. Whatever path you choose, you'll have to live with the consequences.

It's life, Jim, but not as we know it...

As investigations go, this is something of an epic, spanning six discs that are brimming with splendid computer-generated backgrounds and live-action video. Searching every nook and cranny of every location is the key to success. In this virtual 3-D world, that means looking on top of and under every bookcase, bench, and shelf for that tiny piece of evidence that will take the plot just one stage further.

Most of the puzzles aren't that daunting, but if you get stuck, you can access the handy context-sensitive help system. (But be ready to lose points when you do.)

The mouse-driven control interface is virtually identical to Under A Killing Moon's. It allows for fast movement through this virtual world so that every detail can be explored and examined.

The graphic detail of each location is excellent, and each scene is different enough to make it interesting. Likewise, the soundtrack enhances the atmosphere and tension of various circumstances in a subtle but worthwhile manner.

Even charred ruins contain useful bits of info.

Interactive movies have suffered from many criticisms, not the least of which has been hammy acting. Well, Tex's character is supposed to be like that. Other performances from such acting dignitaries as Barry Corbin (*Northern Exposure*), Tanya Roberts (*A View to a Kill*), and Kevin McCarthy (*Invasion of the Body Snatchers*) are utterly believable, which makes for a pleasant change.

Hollywood values of pace and cinematography are evident in Adrian Carr's (*Quigley Down Under*) fluid direction. There really is a sense of being involved in a very large event, rather than an overblown graphic-adventure game. The upshot of this is that making it through one of the three routes to one of the seven different endings is a delightful necessity rather than a chore once the investigation has begun.

That said, you have to accept that the pace is never going to reach manic proportions. Furthermore, the video action sequences, which act as cut scenes, create a sense of detachment from the game's events—they make you feel like you're watching a movie, rather than taking part in one. Finally, with a game of this scope and size, frequent CD-swapping is a must, which can be cumbersome. Fortunately, the story is so strong and compelling that regardless of the pains, you're going to want to reach the end.

If you enjoyed Under A Killing Moon, you will simply love The Pandora Directive's depth, adventure, and plot. Bear in mind, however, that sleuthing is a time-consuming vocation that requires a great deal of patience and an eye for detail—not to mention a keen sense of logic. If you're willing to take the time, a thoroughly compelling story, superb presentation, and an absorbing adventure await.

TIPS

• Use the 3-D environment. Don't be ashamed to get on your hands and knees to search for clues. • Search every location thoroughly. *Extremely* thoroughly. Leave no box unmoved, no cupboard unopened. • To get into Rusty's Fun House, talk to Officer MacMulden. • Louie will help with the Untranslated Letter. • One-eyed chocoholic Clint knows about Emily.

Litterbox fodder

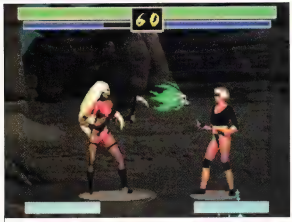
Catfight

I'm not quite sure what to say about Catfight, except that it must have seemed like a good idea at the time. An all-women fighting game, in which luscious war-vixens battle it out in bloody, nail-ripping, hair-tearing combat? Can't go wrong, right?

Catfight is unreservedly the worst fighting game this reviewer has ever come across, and I've seen some bad ones. Basically, it's unplayable. Leaving aside, for the moment, its complete stupidity, the controls are syrupy, the fighters move in video-captured jerks and shuffles, and the sound is a collection of muffled screeches and grunts.

The game runs from Windows in a tiny screen (a litterboxed version?), which you can blow up to full-screen if you don't mind slowing the game down by about half. Since it's a clunker to begin with, that's a big problem.

But back to its complete stupidity. No one's arguing that fighting games are meant to be cerebral, but the spectacle of these half-dressed women capering after each other inspires belly laughter, not titillation. Rare is the game that brings an entire editorial staff together around a PC to shake their disbelieving heads in unison. But Catfight managed the trick.



Unfortunately, Catfight's challenge lies in finding something—anything—redeemable in its gameplay.

As incredibly lame as it is, the scenario would be excusable if the fighting was actually entertaining. It's not. The graphics are so weak and so choppy, it's often hard to tell whether or not your input was registered. Compatibility with the Gravis GrIP helps, but the surprise is that the computer is still easy to beat, regardless of control problems. A human opponent puts up more of a fight, and after five minutes, you'll be punching each other for real, arguing over whose idea it was to buy this thing, anyway.

—Daniel Morris

Pouting palookas

Total Knockout Championship Female Boxing

If you've ever slid a quarter into the old coin-op Punch Out, you've already got the gist of Total Knockout, a first-person arcade boxing game whose only new contribution is to put babes into the boxing trunks.

You appear on the screen as the green outline of a fighter, looking up across the ring at an opponent bearing down at you. When the bell rings, you throw jabs and hooks at her head or body, or save your energy for a bout-ending uppercut when she's stunned.

Sidestep the uppercuts and deliver a jaw-jarring counterpunch.

We've been here and done this before, years ago—the cadre of chesty prizefighters notwithstanding. The designers at Digital Lobster are coin-op vets (this is their first PC product), and they seem content to port this Punch Out clone to CD-ROM. The only bells and whistles new to the PC experience are a few 3-D cut scenes of cheering champs and pouting palookas.

For those who grooved on Punch Out, the old thrills are back, if a little slower and less responsive. An international cast of computer opponents brings signature moves and taunts, and each presents a few timing/dodging tricks to master before she can be overcome.

There are also network, modem, and serial options, plus a distracting split-screen view for those without hook-ups. The secret-moves, death-dealer crowd will be unimpressed with the limited repertoire of mayhem.

An arcade boxing title doesn't demand much, and Total Knockout gets it done. But for the money, you might get more enjoyment out of taking a roll of quarters down to the arcade and pumping them into your old favorite. *—Daniel Morris*

Run-of-the-mill shooter

S.T.O.R.M.

Man is up to his usual tricks of polluting the world and wasting its resources when, in a stunning stroke of good fortune, a new mineral called Praxillium is discovered 400 miles southeast of Newfoundland. Exhibiting the fission-like qualities of uranium without the radioactive waste, this element is clearly the energy source of the future. So an underwater mining installation is set up, but it suffers from an unexpected explosion. Contact is lost and a rescue mission begins.

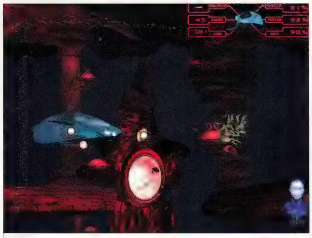
Joined by a couple of highly trained pals, you must pilot the S.T.O.R.M. (Submersible Tactical Operational Reconnaissance Module) and find out what happened. You get five different rechargeable weapons and must maintain S.T.O.R.M.'s oxygen level with scattered spare canisters, which can prove tricky.

Throughout the game's 26 levels, many of the classic deep-sea legends are touched upon in superb graphical style. From Atlantis to the *Titanic*, a whole underwater world is unearthed. Some levels require one of your team to go outside the vessel to retrieve objects, which puts you in serious danger from the sharks that lurk in frightening numbers.

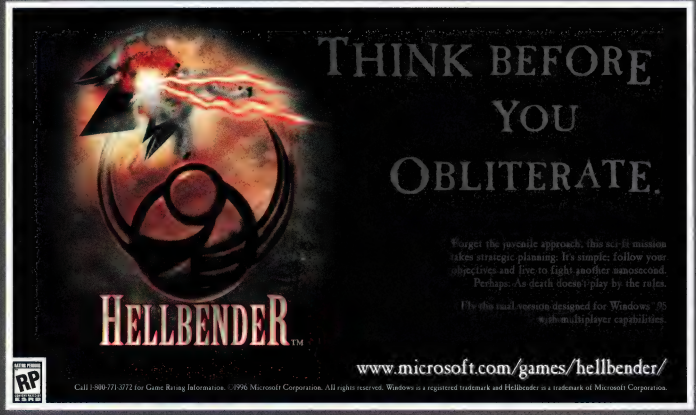
Spread over three CDs, S.T.O.R.M. features some impressive animated cut sequences that enhance the story, detailed parallax scrolling that provides a great look, and a subtle soundtrack that adds to the atmosphere. But the actual levels are surprisingly bland, and the gameplay is severely lacking. Except for the odd railed-shooter section, which is neither challenging nor particularly worthwhile (though it looks great), there's little significant variation between the levels.

In the end, the lack of speed and action makes finishing a level to view the excellent cinematics just a little too tiresome.

—Rob Smith



Turning Medusa to stone is just one of the classic legends featured in the underwater world.



F-22
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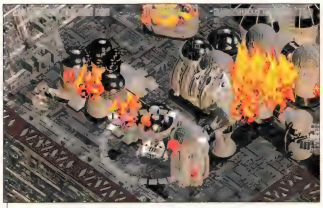
Burn, baby, burn

Fire Fight

Imagine Crusader: No Remorse with a Command & Conquer playing field and you'll have a taste of the happy mayhem that developer Chaos Works has created in Fire Fight.

This multidirectional shoot-'em-up for Windows 95, released by Electronic Arts and Epic MegaGames, finds you piloting a pincer-shaped, multipurpose fighter on a series of 18 hairy missions over parallax-scrolling terrain so gorgeous you almost hate to set it on fire.

But that's what the bald fellow back at headquarters keeps ordering, so that's what you keep doing—over leafy jungle, industrial forest, Arctic tundra, and metallic bases that are seen from an angled-down point of view.



Fire Fight will satiate your hunger for destruction.

And damned if you won't enjoy yourself. The missions have a pleasant variety. Sometimes you'll need to beam up materials or operatives and deposit them at a destination. Some scenarios are multistage affairs in which you'll need to clear areas in sequence. And in some, you'll scorch everything in sight.

Powerups that increase your supply of ammo or beef up your shields are sometimes hidden under vegetation, secreted in buildings, or sequestered in secret areas. The match-in-the-gas-tank explosions look super, and some ruined structures emit a nice oily smoke. There's just one problem: You *must* have horsepower to run this game. Even on a Pentium 133, play was slightly choppy. During a two-player network deathmatch using a 486DX4/120 and a Pentium 75, it was downright sluggish.

However, if you've got the right stuff under the hood, this is definitely a game to show it off. —*Peter Olafson*

Return of the Genestealers

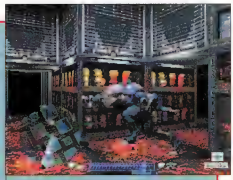
Space Hulk: Vengeance Of the Blood Angels

You could call this redressing the balance: When Space Hulk first appeared on the computer in the early '90s, this *Aliens*-like strategy/action hybrid was essentially a strategy game.

Certainly, action was an element in the bug hunt. En route to the distant exit, you lit up rooms of a derelict spacecraft with your flamethrower and blasted the scary Genestealer aliens into their component parts.

But, overall, it was rather like running a cooperative multiplayer game of Doom as a solo affair, and the dual complexities of the multiple views and ornate controls tended to reduce action and atmosphere to second-class status.

Electronic Arts recast the game splendidly when it converted it to the 3DO as Vengeance of the Blood Angels. The developers seemed to have realized that just being *in* the spacecrafts could be as fun as getting out of them, and that the controls could be slightly less complicated than a flight sim's.



This is one port that actually gets better with its move to Win 95.

Now Space Hulk returns to the PC in a Windows 95 version that leaves these changes intact and adds network play, and the game has improved in the process.

For one thing, this version has a far richer environment; there's a sense of community here. Your fellow marines yell at each other when they get in each other's way. When one goes down, his comrades take revenge. The pregnant darkness of the shipboard corridors is alive with crackling cries of victory, warning, and alarm. And with reason: The giant, shambling Genestealer is now far more intimidating, and there will be times when it feels as though the game is disgorging its full supply of enemies into your one little level.

Beyond that, the system for directing your marines is much more intuitive—basically, it's just point and click.

This is an accessible game, both strategic and fun—something Space Hulk should have been long ago.—*Peter Olafson*

Cosmic bust

Space Dude

Unique—that's a good thing. Uniquely bad—well, that's something most gamers can do without. Somehow, FormGen, distributor of the smash-hit Duke Nukem 3D, has just released a game that's both fairly original and almost unplayable.

It's called Space Dude, and, as you might guess, the developers have tried to inject a little humor into this shooter/dodger. Their idea of giggles is having the title character yell "Aaaaaahhhhhhh" every time he's hit by something and comes crashing toward the ground. If you think that's stupid, you're on the right track.

Manning the defense post is none too fun.

Space Dude
FormGen
800-367-6436
www.formgen.com

Developer: Evryware
Platform: DOS/Win 95
Requires: 486/33, DOS 3.0, 2MB RAM, sound card
List Price: $39.95

GAMEPLAY:	D+
GETTING STARTED:	A-
GRAPHICS:	D+
SOUND CHECK:	D
OVERALL	D

Space Dude is bad from the start: With mediocre graphics and a middling soundtrack, the game makes a lousy first impression. The sound effects, reminiscent of older console systems, are even worse. Can the gameplay take up the slack?

Nope. Space Dude's pseudo-strategy setup, which has you trying to protect a colony from invaders by establishing defense posts or attacking the enemy directly, adds an interesting element. And letting Space Dude fight or flee his enemies from a number of creative perspectives distinguishes the main part of this game from the average shooter. Yet, for all the points of view, the action's just dull, dull, dull.

It's clumsy, too. Whether you're using a mouse, joystick, or keyboard, moving Space Dude around the screen is frequently awkward. The last thing you should have to worry about while dodging spiders, firing cannons, or surfing ozone is your controls—trying to find out which one works best for a given scene. Chances are, you'll be hearing Space Dude's excruciating yell way too often.

So don't let the FormGen name sway you. Duke may be the King, but Space Dude's a born loser. —*Corey Cohen*

Fighting the old fight

Pray for Death

Kick the purple ooze out of your demonic opponents.

Death, that old schemer, sits around on his shadow-covered throne one day, tapping his skeletal fingers and wondering how to enliven his afternoon. What's he settle on? Why, an all-out tournament of combat and carnage, of course.

Pray for Death serves up yet another side-view fightfest, this one fought at the gates of hell itself. As Yogi Berra observed, it's déjà vu all over again. If you own any fighting games for a 32-bit game platform, I'm not sure why you'd want to lay down the money for one of their slower, jerkier, less graphically satisfying PC cousins. But if you're a PC-only guy with a jones for brawling, you could do worse than Pray for Death (just look at Catfight and Total Knockout Boxing, page 66).

Pray for Death
Virgin Interactive
800-874-4607
www.vie.com

Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486DX/66, 8MB RAM, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $34.95–44.95

GAMEPLAY:	C
GETTING STARTED:	B-
GRAPHICS:	B
SOUND CHECK:	C-
OVERALL	C

More-gore types will be disappointed, however. The death scenes are strictly PG-13, and there's not a single decapitation, evisceration, or other mutilation. These death-brawlers seem downright gentlemanly when it comes to the coup-de-grace.

The fighting itself offers nothing that you couldn't get in any other respectable entry in the genre. You fight with the standard weak-punch, hard-punch, weak-kick, hard-kick controls and the various combos thereof.

Some variety at least makes the match-ups interesting for a time. Hell-spawn demons, robotic war machines, death angels, vikings, and more compete for the right to face Death for the tournament title. (Jeez. You thought Michael Jordan was tough in the playoffs? Try the Grim Reaper!)

The game's animation and interesting 3-D cut scenes give you a little something extra to look at, too. But Pray for Death is a standard, adequate fighting game, nothing more.

—*Daniel Morris*

Sacrilege was never so funny

PLAY the Demo on the disc

Monty Python & the Quest for the Holy Grail

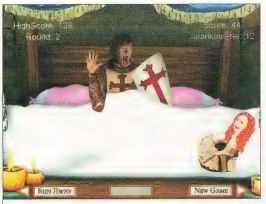
By Shane Mooney

The date is approximately 932 A.D. It's sometime in the afternoon, and King Arthur and his trusty servant Patsy are galloping (sans horses) through the king's vast tracts of land. Lo and behold! A vision of God appears on the local billboard.

After much shaking in his medieval boots, Arthur learns that God has commissioned him to seek out the Holy Grail. (If you've never seen a King Arthur movie or the last Indiana Jones flick, the Holy Grail is reportedly the cup that Christ drank from shortly before his death. It is said that the kingdom that possesses the Grail will never perish.) Now you must aid Arthur and his rather festive Knights of the Round Table on their quest to seek the Grail. Along the way you'll maneuver stealthily through such comic bits as the lustful Nuns at Castle Anthrax, the dismembered Black Knight who never quits, and the arrogant Frenchmen and their cow catapult.

Unlike the movie, which forced you to simply watch the funny bits, the game lets you interact with the action in the more memorable scenes.

As you can tell, this is not your typical adventure game. Based on the movie of the same name (actually, "based" is not a strong enough word; "shamelessly copying" would be more accurate), this title does a splendid job of taking the feel of the movie and transposing it to a new medium. You travel from famous bit to famous bit, occasionally using your mouse to interact with the story, or rather, move the story along. Clicking on one of several hot spots in any given scene provides comic results of varying degrees.



Help Sir Galahad the Pure in a round of Spank the Virgin.

this isn't entertainment for the kiddies, a quick round of Spank the Virgin should clear up any misconceptions. Some of these games are more than just shameless titillation, however; they're fun and challenging.

Several Monty Python alum (including Eric Idle) have lent new vocal tracks to this CD, as well as the never-before-seen clip "King Brian the Wild." If that's not enough to pique your interest, there's also original artwork by Terry Gilliam, which adds to the campy cut-and-paste look of the entire interface. The latter manages to be highly original but still remain true to the Pythonesque counterculture.

Sadly enough, the game is pretty short; like the movie, you should be able to see just about everything in a few hours. And if you haven't seen the movie before, not only are you a boring stuffed shirt who wouldn't know a funny movie if it came and bit you on the bum, but you won't get a lot of the inside jokes, or for that matter, the outside jokes.

But let's not be petty. This is without question the funniest and most entertaining adventure game to come down the pipe since Full Throttle.

After each sketch, there are games you can play that relate to what you just saw. After the famous Bubonic Plague gag (no pun intended), you can opt to play Drop Dead, a variation of Tetris that uses contorted cadavers (mostly dead) instead of blocks to fill the gaps. After the Witch Burning Trial, you can try your hand at Burn the Witch, a memory game similar to Simon in which you must repeat the pattern of witch burnings. If it isn't abundantly clear by now that

PC GAMES A LIST

Monty Python & The Quest for the Holy Grail
7th Level
800-979-8466
www.7thlevel.com

Platform: Win 3.1/Win 95 CD
Requires: 486DX/33, 8MB RAM, Win 3.1, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive, mouse, sound card
List Price: $49.95

GAMEPLAY:	A
GETTING STARTED:	B
GRAPHICS:	A-
SOUND CHECK:	B+
OVERALL	A-

If you loved the movie, you'd have to be out of your bloody gourd not to own this title.

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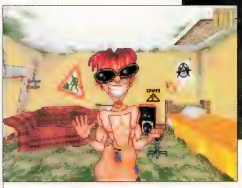
http://www.gtxtreactive.com

Normality

By Shane Mooney

Whoa, dude. Like, I'm just minding my own business when the Norm Police come and throw me in the slammer.



It's amazing what a surfer dude can fit in his pockets. Be sure to pick up everything you see: You never know when that Sharkpoon will come in handy.

Not many game genres have been around as long as adventure games. But nowadays, between burned-out '80s stars appearing in interactive movies and the near-endless demand for 3-D shooters, it often seems as if adventure gaming will die a slow, painful death.

So what's an aspiring adventurer to do while staring down the barrel of Duke Nukem's Devastator? Simple: Buck the trend, strive for abnormality, and make a first-person adventure game. And that's exactly what Interplay has done.

Somewhere in the not-too-distant future, the world has come to personify everything "normal" (read: fascist). Its totalitarian leader, Paul Nystalux, makes sure that everyone leads an ordinary, tedious life, and he insists on turning people into couch potatoes by using hypnotic devices hidden within the world's furniture.

You play Kent, a happenin' surfer dude who's just spent the last week locked in solitary for being just a bit too happy. Now that you're "free," you're told to stay in your flat and do nothing but watch TV 24 hours a day, while the Norm Police station themselves outside your door. (This is supposed to be a bad thing?)

Man, with a girth like that, I can see why he's the lead furniture tester in Neutropolis.

But there are those in Neutropolis who refuse to be bored, and being the closet happy-go-lucky, you must meet up with the resistance and rescue the only person who can help wake up the citizens and overthrow their staid leader: his aging twin brother, Saul.

Unlike your typical 2-D adventure game, where you guide cardboard cutouts around painted backdrops, Normality places you in a 3-D environment in which you control the action from a first-person perspective. Rather than just pointing and clicking on a spot you'd like to move to, you actually have full control of your character, giving you a freedom of movement that's virtually unmatched among adventure games.

Normality's 3-D engine is pretty low-tech compared to id's Quake engine, but it's not too bad. And don't let the fact that it's 3-D fool you—this is an adventure game through and through, with puzzles to solve and challenges to overcome. You acquire items for your inventory and use them at appropriate moments, and you talk to the characters you meet.

That said, Normality isn't as great as it could have been. The lead character's voice is provided by eternal teenager Corey Feldman, and it's terrible. I can explain it only by imagining that he sat alone in a sound booth and read off page after page of dialogue in about an hour. Instead of sounding like a gnarly surfer dude, he just sounds lame.

Also, experienced adventure-gaming gurus may find a lot of the gameplay to be a bit, well, normal. Get object, match object with puzzle, etc., etc. This part, you've done before.

Fortunately, a few challenging puzzles will keep even the most accomplished adventurers guessing, and the rest of the game, with its quirky characters and surreal atmosphere, can be quite entertaining. And Normality's game world is enormous, which makes for quite a few hours of gaming. Who would have thought that leading such a "normal" life could be so much fun?

Normality
Interplay
800-468-3775
www.interplay.com

Platform: DOS/Win 95 CD
Requires: 486/66, 8MB RAM, DOS 5.1 or Win 95, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive, mouse, sound card
List Price: $49.95

GAMEPLAY:	B+
GETTING STARTED:	A-
GRAPHICS:	B+
SOUND CHECK:	C+
OVERALL	B-

Normality is more than your average adventure. But despite the first-person perspective, much of the gameplay will seem tame to seasoned adventurers.

TIPS

- To escape your apartment, use the pecking bird with the remote to keep the TV on.
- Climb up through the grill in the john to get to the debris you'll need to distract the guard.
- If you have to do a stint in the cells, remember to break the benches by using them. They contain valuable items you'll need to get out.
- Toward the end of the game, you have no choice but to go to the stadium and fetch Saul's brain backup machine and smuggle Brian's guitar onto the stage.

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SimCity meets Heaven and Hell

Afterlife

By Steve Klett

Take the time to check out the incredible amount of detail in Heaven and Hell. You'll be glad you did.

There I sat, smugly overseeing my brilliantly constructed Heaven and Hell, which were overflowing with positively euphoric and positively miserable souls, respectively. All was as it should be in Afterlife.

In fact, things were going so well in Hell that at any moment I could expect The Powers That Be to bestow the gift of The Flabbergasting Flatulence Ol-Factory. (A sense of humor is required to play this game.) Then things would get really bad in Hell, which, of course, would mean even finer rewards were just around the corner. Suddenly, my Afterlife advisors, Jasper (Hell) and Aria (Heaven), popped up to inform me that while I had plenty of souls in Heaven and Hell, most of those souls didn't believe in the realms' existence. Yikes! That couldn't be good.

What to do? Simple: With a little cash, I could bribe some actors to espouse religions with those beliefs (there are 24 different religions in all) and thereby boost my souls' belief in the afterlife. Done. Anxiously, I watched the population graph. Yes! The populations were increasing—slowly.

Too slowly, it turned out. Suddenly, all my structures in Hell started turning to ice—Hell was freezing over!—and all the structures in Heaven were turning blue and shutting down. Heaven was getting the Blues. Souls started leaving Heaven and Hell like rats from a sinking ship. In minutes, my "brilliantly constructed" Afterlife was reduced to a ruined state from which it would never recover. Game over.

If you don't like puns, you won't like Afterlife.

That's just one of hundreds of ways a typical Afterlife game can play out. There really is no goal you reach to win. Like SimCity, you try to build a prosperous Heaven and Hell by setting up and maintaining the proper population balance and the proper amount of transportation and housing.

Setting up a good balance of Fate Zoning is most important. Like residential and industrial zoning in SimCity, Fate Zoning is the process of designating—by laying down different-colored tiles—what type of souls live in particular areas. For example, souls sent to Hell for the sin of Wrath (all seven deadly sins and virtues are represented) can live only in sectors designated by red tiles. Lustful souls must live in sectors designated by purple tiles. Establish balanced Fate Zones, with each zone far enough away from its neighbor in Hell or close enough to its neighbor in Heaven, and you have the building blocks for a successful career as a Demiurge—a servant of The Powers That Be, responsible for presiding over the Afterlife.

You get cash—Pennies From Heaven, to be precise—for each soul you draw into your Afterlife. The more souls you bring in, the more money you get. The more money you get, the more interesting things you can build. The more efficient your Heaven or Hell becomes, the more money you get for each new soul. So goes the cycle.

Yet, there's much more to consider, such as which special

continued on page 78

PC GAMES A LIST

Afterlife
LucasArts
800-782-7927
www.lucasarts.com

Platform: DOS/Win 95 CD
Requires: 486DX2/66, 8MB RAM, DOS 6.0 or Win 95, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive, mouse
Price: $54.95

GAMEPLAY:	B+
GETTING STARTED:	C
GRAPHICS:	B+
SOUND CHECK:	A
OVERALL	A-

A clever twist on SimCity that will tickle your funnybone and keep you up past your bedtime.

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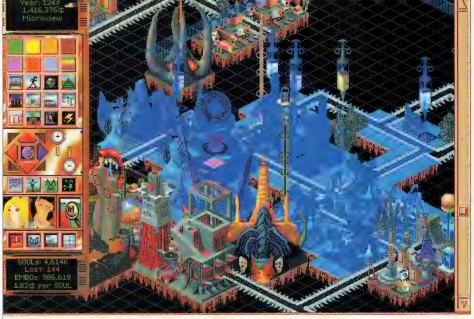


Yes, Johnny, Hell really does freeze over.

continued from page 76

structures and buildings give off good or bad vibes; whether or not you have enough beer to retain souls if Hell Freezes Over (and it will); and the effect of bat guano on buildings.

Such odd and funny considerations are par for the course in this clever game, but a word of warning: Afterlife is Hellaciously punny. If you don't like puns, you won't like Afterlife. If you do, you're in for a treat. Puns are everywhere, from the Bad Things that can happen to your Afterlife (such as the release of The Bats out of Hell or The Birds of Paradise, Hell in a Handbasket, and Disco Inferno) to the names of the buildings: Fiction Pulp, Seizure's Palace, and Hellrose Place (my personal favorite). In my book, the developers deserve a sincere tip of the hat for their clever, unique style of humor, which sets Afterlife apart from other, more serious sims, such as SimCity or Transport Tycoon.

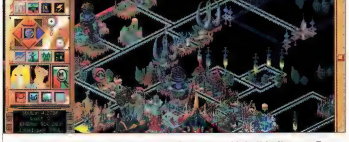
Afterlife offers several scenarios to manage, such as Dante's Divine Sitcom.

But don't let the jokes fool you. Managing Heaven and Hell is hard, albeit fun, work. If Afterlife sounds a little too demanding, don't despair. You have the option of managing just Heaven or Hell—you don't *have* to manage both. In addition, whenever something goes wrong, you can click on Divine Intervention to put things on hold until you figure out the problem. And Jasper and Aria provide useful advice and warnings. There are also three game-speed settings: Mortal Plodding, Hounds of Hell, and Demonically Fast.

In technical terms, Afterlife is very similar to SimCity. It uses a mouse-driven interface that is complex yet intuitive—no easy task to pull off. Its basic gameplay mechanics are identical: You click, hold, drag, and release to lay down zoning and point-and-click to place individual structures. Afterlife also offers tons of easily accessible graphs and charts that cover every imaginable piece of information.

Where Afterlife differs, aside from its rampant humor, is in its extreme attention to detail. The animations and graphics of the 200-or-so rendered Rewards and Punishments (the domiciles where your souls reside in Heaven and Hell, respectively) and roughly 300 additional rendered tiles and buildings are simply superb. You also have the ability to look at profiles of individual souls. By itself, this is a hoot, but you also have the option of tracking these people as they progress through their Afterlife.

This game may be a SimCity clone, but it offers lots more to do—and lots more to worry about. Afterlife is an uproariously funny addition to the genre that will have you laughing out loud on several occasions. If you liked SimCity but thought it a bit dry, you *must* try this sim.



Do most everything in Hell the opposite way you'd do it in Heaven. For example, spread everything out so your souls have farther to walk.

CHEATS

- **Type $€! any time during the game to receive an extra 10 million pennies. You'll get an extra 10 million every time you type it in, up to five times.**
- **Type SAMNMAX (all caps) three times to wreak havoc. (Save your game first.)**

TIPS

- **In Hell, make your roads as convoluted as possible; in Heaven, make them straight and efficient.**
- **Pay attention to Jasper and Aria: They have lots of helpful info.**
- **Go through each of the tutorials. They may save your Afterlife.**
- **Keep a close eye on the balance of your Fate Zoning—a proper balance is key to maintaining the contentment, or misery, of your souls. Adjust the balance manually whenever possible, because automatic balancing is just too expensive in the long run.**

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Quirky, challenging fun

Zapitalism

By Barry Brenesal

Explore the farthest reaches of Zapinalia for hidden riches.

Leave no stone unturned in your quest for 1 million zabies.

Zapitalism is the brainchild of the pleasantly warped imaginations of LavaMind Productions, the folks who brought us Gazillionaire. In fact, Zapitalism could easily pass for Gazillionaire, except that it isn't its predecessor. Both games share three basic characteristics: they are turn-based, competitive economics simulations; they're programmed on a shoestring; and they're wonderful off-the-wall fun.

The scenario is simplicity itself. In the Archipelago of Mermadan (on the popular island of Zapinalia), Queen Kesh Keshi Gomu has opened the economy to foreign imports for the first time in 1,000 years. As the active partner in one of up to six firms invited to compete for business, it's your job to make 1 million zabies (Zapinalia's currency) before anybody else does.

Piece of cake, you say? Oh ho, shallow fool. Each week (or turn), you must negotiate with trade unions, pay taxes, take out loans, and weigh the purchase of disaster insurance. Adjust your advertising, store appearance, and maintenance costs. Attempt to secure a building permit for extra warehouse space.

The latter is an open-bid procedure, which means you're competing with five other greedy capitalists. Don't count on their cupidity turning into stupidity: Zapitalism's artificial intelligence is pretty good. Each of your competitors pays close attention to the marketable commodities, noting the percentage of defective returns and the public's level of perceived product importance. (These factors are reconfigured randomly from game to game.)

If buying wholesale and selling retail isn't enough, consider investing in the stock market. It's not a sophisticated version of the real thing, so you shouldn't expect that dumping all your shares of a prized issue will dramatically lower the value for other shareholders; but it does work, primarily by analyzing trends.

There are also "chance" occurrences in Zapitalism, which, like the famous Monopoly card, toss you any one of several types of events: the good, the mixed blessing, the nasty, and the disgusting. On Mermadan, the nasty is usually a lava flow from the main island's central volcano that carries away part of your storefront. But who knows? You may get a chance to invest in a starving poet's new play, and receive five times your investment upon success—or lose it all when his work fails.

When you feel like traveling, you can take weekly trips around the island, searching for buried pirate treasure or excavating alien ruins. You also have a computer-controlled business partner that you can send out on much longer journeys with potentially greater returns.

There's the Magma Zone, where a chance word in the right ear could affect the quantity of an upcoming product. Or the Hive, where a mood-control scent briefly induces customers to purchase whatever you want. And don't forget the Hermit Pit, the home of the island's grumpiest hermit, who can curse or bless your luck for weeks to come. Because you have only one partner, and some trips take several weeks, you'll need to choose your itineraries wisely.

Graphics? Largely VGA and unanimated. There's little of Gazillionaire's visual humor, but the same satirical sense crops up in discussions of the various cultures, products, and peoples of this strange little archipelago.

In short, Zapitalism isn't for everybody. It's not visually exciting, doesn't feature your favorite ex- TV and movie stars, and won't generate pulse-pounding excitement. It's a quirky, silly, imaginative economics sim—hard to beat but easy to enjoy.

What Zapitalism lacks in beauty, it makes up for with fun.

Zapitalism
LavaMind Productions
415-566-3808
www@lavamind.com

Platform: Win/Win 95 CD
Requires: 486/33, 8MB RAM, Win 3.1, double-speed CD-ROM drive

GAMEPLAY:	B
GETTING STARTED:	A-
GRAPHICS:	C+
SOUND CHECK:	D+
OVERALL	B

A delightfully silly economics sim that's easy to learn, hard to beat, and fun to play.

S.O.S.

- **Zapitalism is a study in trends. If your luck goes bad, it'll tend to remain bad until it suddenly breaks. Try reloading the last game save before your luck turned sour.**
- **Examine the traveling map very carefully. Sometimes a new location will appear, housing a saboteur. For the right amount, he'll do some extra special damage to an enemy of your choice.**
- **To double your inventory space, bid early and high on at least one extra warehouse.**
- **If you can't buy all of an available item wholesale, set the retail price to midrange and try to undercut whoever buys the rest. They'll be stuck with useless inventory for several turns to come.**
- **Check out the rate of damaged returns on all items. It changes from game to game, but remains constant within any given game, so you'll know what products are best to avoid.**

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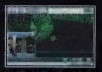
– Shane Mooney, PC Games

"An innovative, eye-grabbing, puzzle-lover's dream."
– John Sellers, Time Out NY

"Where has this been all my life?"
– William Webster, Former Director of the C.I.A.

"A fascinating espionage adventure – and truly a great game."
– Scott Gehrs, Computer Game Review



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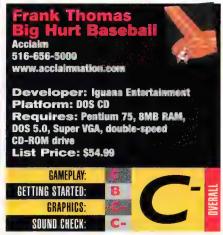
Unintentionally painful

Frank Thomas Big Hurt Baseball

With motion-captured players and 3-D–rendered stadiums, Big Hurt Baseball promises enough big-league technology to match Frank Thomas' MVP playing style. But that's not good enough. From the first crack of the bat, it's clear that Big Hurt is missing many of the features that other PC baseball games offer: The graphics are poor, customization is limited, and the touted 3-D renditions of the stadiums fail to impress.

As recommended in the meager manual, you get the fullest range of control by using the Gravis GrIP. You can attain almost as much functionality with the keyboard, but it's awkward and makes gameplay difficult.



One serious problem is that the entire game is played from the batter's point of view, even when you're controlling the pitcher. This makes it difficult to determine where the strike zone is, and often, pitching inside results in a beaned batsman.

Big Hurt doesn't live up to its big-league potential.

Meanwhile, Big Hurt suffers from the typical limitations of PC baseball games, such as spotty artificial intelligence and computer-controlled pitchers that rarely throw balls. Luckily, as in real baseball, the computer-controlled batters often swing at pitches outside the strike zone.

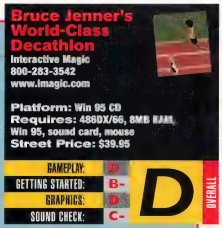
Amid all the fouls, there are some nice touches here. The motion-captured player animations add a hint of realism to certain pitchers' motions, and when Frank Thomas comes to the plate he swings the bat like the genuine article. Also, pitchers lose arm strength as the game progresses, so a Randy Johnson fastball that crosses the plate at 95 mph in the first inning cruises at only 89 mph in the 7th inning.

Those features are cool, but there aren't enough of them to make up for the game's limitations. If you want a baseball game that captures all the intricacies of the national pastime, take an intentional walk and bypass Big Hurt.

—Bobby Snow

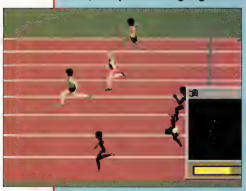
Athletics in the slow lane

Bruce Jenner's World-Class Decathlon



Interactive Magic signed former Olympic decathlete Bruce Jenner to headline this sports sim, which aims to re-create the strategy and action of the marathon two-day event.

Naturally, each of the decathlon's classic 10 events is featured, including the long jump, pole vault, and discus. Each event can be tried in practice mode, in a single decathlon event, or as part of an ongoing season. After creating your athlete from a range of nationalities and skin hues, you have the option of customizing aspects of his skills by distributing a fixed number of points among attributes such as speed and coordination.



Hmm—maybe Bruce should have stuck with infomercials.

Each event requires a simple series of mouse clicks—to set speed levels in running events, or to begin movement and unleash the throw or jump in other events. The strategy element involves tempering the effort required to achieve the necessary point total against an endurance rating that wanes throughout the day.

Sadly, the lack of energy needed to control the athletes detracts heavily from the sense of realism and, more importantly, the sense of fun. Attaining the title of "Best Athlete in the World" is amazingly underplayed—probably because, in the end, it doesn't really mean anything.

Visually, all the events are incredibly dull. The backdrops are bland, and it looks, feels, and sounds as if you're competing in an empty stadium. Jenner does interject with tips before each event, and in the locker room you can sit through an interview covering the life and times of this well-known decathlete.

The bottom line is that Decathlon is just not exciting or interesting enough to play for very long. The long-term goals are unappealing, and the athlete development is uninspiring and, ultimately, boring.

—Rob Smith

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GT Interactive Software
CD-ROM

Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus

Gender Wars

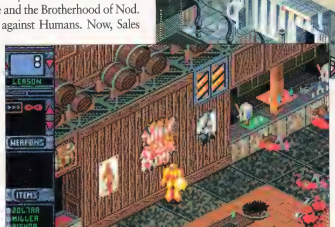
By Daniel Morris

Command & Conquer let you choose between the Global Defense Initiative and the Brotherhood of Nod. Warcraft II pitted Orcs against Humans. Now, Sales Curve Interactive's foray into real-time strategy gaming sends history's most time-honored grudge match into full raging battle—girls against boys.

Gender Wars, developed by the UK's 8th Day, is a clever and absorbing game that takes the increasingly popular isometric strategy genre in a wild new direction.

The setup is warped—and hilarious. But it's not all Gender Wars has to offer. There's a heckuva strategy game in here as well. The real-time action is fast and furious, combining trigger-reflex mass destruction with a wide variety of mission scenarios and objectives. Think of it as Crusader meets *The Honeymooners*.

Unarmed? Unlucky.



The guys defend their most sacred turf: the beer hall.

But, again, if you think everything's fun and games, you've got quite a bombshell coming—literally. Incredible violence is the order of just about every screen in every level. Machine guns churn flesh, grenades scatter limbs, and innocent civilians often find themselves an unwilling part of the turkey shoot.

The action's hot, but strategy buffs will still find things to do. Attention must be paid to stealing sperm/eggs for your procreation facilities. Sensitive sabotage, espionage, and assassination missions require as much stealth as firepower.

The graphics are a pleasant surprise. A hi-res Super VGA option treats you to nicely detailed combat environments ranging from skyscrapers to parks to garages to dormitories. Everything is awfully small, though; your view is from very high up, so following the action can sometimes become a *Where's Waldo?*-type experience.

Real-time combat being what it is, it's a refreshing break to play a game with a small, squad-level focus and a simple command interface. Point, click, shoot. Amen.

Having only four troops to worry about makes the game not only tactically satisfying, but also controllable. You're in charge, but if squad leadership isn't your thing, you can choose to play as one of the grunts while the squad leader calls the shots. As the leader, you can divvy up your team however you like, remaining as a group or splitting your troops into smaller, autonomous factions.

I wouldn't let them loose, though, because one of the two big strikes against Gender Wars is its shady artificial intelligence. When people usually complain about weak AI, they have small gripes. But here, enemies can do the dumbest things, like standing around doing nothing while you meticulously execute everyone around them. There's nothing like sentries who remains unaware of intruders when grenades are detonating about 20 feet behind them.

Seeing as how the game lacks multiplayer support (strike two), better AI would have been nice. But the occasionally gimpy foes aside, Gender Wars is still a cool little action game. With a simple interface, sharp graphics, and outrageous politically incorrect humor, it's a spat worth checking out.

CHEATS

- **God mode:** Before you enter a mission, type "Buy a Playstation" into one of the Save Game slots.

TIPS

- **Place Sentry Guns in front of enemy pillboxes to mow down reinforcements before they can enter the fight.**
- **Use the ricochet effect of your grenades to bounce a grenade off a wall and clear bad guys around corners.**
- **Select squadmates suited for the mission at hand. Aggressive types make too much noise during stealth ops, while purely brainy types are of no use in a defensive stand.**
- **Clear floors quickly and efficiently by posting one squaddie as a lethal hall monitor while the others clear each individual room.**

Gender Wars
Sales Curve Interactive
800-292-3797
www.sci.co.uk

Developer: The 8th Day
Platform: DOS/Win 95 CD
Requirements: 486DX/33, 6MB RAM, DOS 6.0 or Win 95
Price: $39.95

GAMEPLAY:	B
GETTING STARTED:	B-
GRAPHICS:	B+
SOUND CHECK:	B
OVERALL	B

The comic twist is just the icing on this clever, involving real-time strategy game.

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For armchair generals only

The American Civil War: From Sumter to Appomattox

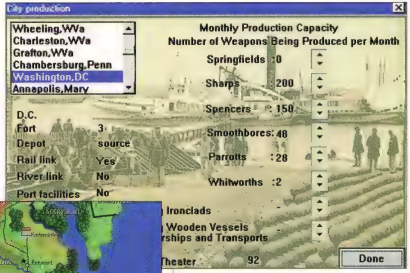
By Andrew Miller

Interactive Magic's The American Civil War is a strategic-level Civil War sim—the operative words being "strategic-level." Despite the fact that you're the commander-in-chief of a nation and its armed forces, you'll not find much actual fightin' here.

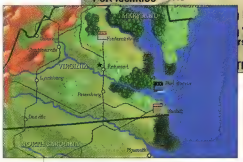
If you're looking for a game where you test your tactical military prowess against a computer or a friend, you're going to be disappointed with The American Civil War. This game's more for the control freak who's in search of a thinking-person's military sim—the kind where victory and defeat are more than just what occurs on the battlefield.

You command either side of America's greatest conflict, starting at the beginning of 1861 or in the spring of 1862 or 1863. You get to recruit troops, build ships, form armies and fleets, and then give the marching orders that reflect your grand strategy. The game can be won by political or military means, which gives you many ways to decide the outcome of the war.

Civil War's best feature is its vast database of every major commander from both the Union and Confederate forces. More than 120 real-life leaders—including Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, and William T. Sherman—have been historically re-created, with ratings for inspiration, aggressiveness, and tactical skills in combat.



You decide what weapons your cities produce.



Where's Gettysburg?

Such realism is admirable, but the game is so intent on being historically accurate that you'll often feel the same frustrations that presidents Lincoln and Jefferson experienced when dealing with these military commanders. Three times I ordered General George McClellan to march on Richmond in the fall of 1861, and three times he refused. In reality, he probably *would* have refused, but it was infuriating nevertheless.

Several what-if options make the game not only more interesting to play, but also more challenging. For instance, you're asked to select the chances of European intervention during the game's setup. You get to decide if the Confederacy gets no chance, a slim chance, or a good chance of intervention from Great Britain or France. I selected "Good Chance," and both France and Great Britain entered the war in the winter of 1862, sending several fleets and troops to aid the South. With the backing of the Europeans, I had to settle for a diplomatic solution at the end of the war. Pretty cool.

The game also includes Fateful Lightning, a multimedia CD-ROM bursting with text, maps, and color photos of the battlefields as they appear today, plus video clips of recent battle re-enactments. Overall, this is an informative, easy-to-use program—a good supplement to the game.

What I-Magic neglected to include, though, was Gettysburg, and that's a big problem. How can a Civil War sim, no matter what level it's played on, come without Gettysburg on its game map? I mean, it's not like it was the biggest battle in American history or anything.

The bottom line for me is that I missed the battles. I like the politics of running a country and a war just as much as the next guy, but in the end, war is about fighting, and its absence left me wanting.

The American Civil War: From Sumter to Appomattox
Interactive Magic
800-283-3542
www.imagicgames.com

Platform: Win 3.1/Win 95 CD
Requires: 486SX/33, 8MB RAM, Win 3.1, Super VGA
List price: $59.99

GAMEPLAY:	C
GETTING STARTED:	C
GRAPHICS:	B
SOUND CHECK:	C
OVERALL	C

This war game is heavy on strategy, light on fighting.

TIPS

- **History shows that the Union blockade was effective. It also works here.**
- **As the Confederate commander, use your slaves to fight. It's not historically accurate, but they could mean the difference between victory and defeat.**
- **Remember that as the Confederate commander, you don't have to conquer the Union forces. The Union will give up if you win enough battles and get European recognition.**

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A wargamer's dream

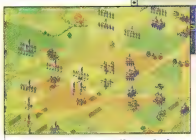
Battleground 3: Waterloo

By Andrew Miller

A year ago, TalonSoft thrilled wargamers with the revolutionary Battleview combat system in Battleground 1: Ardennes. That game was quickly followed by the equally good Battleground 2: Gettysburg. Luckily for war-mongers, TalonSoft hasn't gotten lazy. Thanks to some new features, Battleground 3: Waterloo is easily the best in the series.

Waterloo has exactly what fans of military sims want: an easy-to-use interface, excellent graphics, and above all, historical accuracy. The game also includes more combat video clips than its predecessors and a beautiful classical music soundtrack, complete with Scottish bagpipes. TalonSoft has even added several "what-if" scenarios, conspicuously absent in Gettysburg.

Great graphics, simple interface, historical accuracy—Waterloo has it all.



The computer opponent's no slacker.

But more importantly, Waterloo has been given significantly improved artificial intelligence. Computer-controlled enemy forces are no longer a Saddam Hussein–like pushover. Battleground veterans will find the computer opponent much more aggressive, especially playing as the French. Like Napoleon, the computer can move large numbers of troops and use them in lightning strikes before you prepare a defense. Of course, you can also square off against a friend via e-mail or modem.

Waterloo features more than just the history-changing battle from which it derives its name. The game actually includes 24 different scenarios, ranging from the six-turn "Napoleon's Charge" (a French assault on the Anglo-Allied center) to the 54-turn "It's a Great Day for a Battle," a what-if scenario that gives Napoleon the perfect weather that many historians believe could have led to a French victory.

Before you get too excited, keep in mind that Waterloo is a major time investment, even in its most limited scenarios. One turn, which consists of six different phases, can last anywhere from 20 to 45 minutes. And that's if you know what you're doing. A four- or six-turn scenario can take as long as six to eight hours to complete. The epic Battle of Waterloo, a 44-turn scenario, took me more than a week to finish.

Speaking of time consumption, Waterloo begins sucking up your life the moment you try to install it. It took me more than two hours to routinely install the Typical Game version, and that was using a 486/100 with Windows 3.1 and a quad-speed CD-ROM drive. (The Custom Game version took more than three hours.) The game also ate up more than 100MB on my hard drive.

Once you manage to load the game, you can watch the action unfold in several ways. The close-up 3-D perspective reminded me of those miniature army men I used to collect, miraculously come to life. Unfortunately, the units are so big and so detailed in this perspective that you can only see about 1/10 of the battlefield at a time.

To stay on top of things, you'll need to spend most of your time in the normal 2-D mode, which covers more ground. Having a broader view is important if you're going to move several units during a particular phase, and it makes it easier to track your opponent's movements and attacks.

Skirmishers

- **Put Skirmishers in front of your main line of troops to diminish the effectiveness of enemy fire.**
- **Use the terrain to your advantage. Never attack an enemy that is on higher ground—he has the advantage.**
- **Use some common sense. For instance, if you plan to fire on an opponent's unit later in a turn, make sure that you turn your unit to face the enemy during the earlier movement phase.**
- **Use Skirmishers to assault chateau hexes. Enemy fire isn't as effective against them, and they don't get disordered when trying to enter these hexes.**

One of the drawbacks of Waterloo's hex-based format is that you lose the ebb-and-flow feel of the battle. Because you can move and fire your weapons only in set phases, the battles lose a great deal of continuity. And winning and losing an engagement involves so many variables—unit strength, unit fatigue, unit quality, terrain, and more—that even Mr. Spock might come away with a migraine.

But these are minor complaints. Battleground 3: Waterloo has the complete package: sharp graphics, booming sound, easy interface, and a challenging computer opponent. What more could an aspiring general ask for?

Battleground 3: Waterloo
Empire Interactive
410-933-9191
www.talonsoft.com

Developer: TalonSoft
Platform: Win/Win 95 CD
Requires: 486DX/33, 8MB RAM, Win 3.1, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $49.95

GAMEPLAY:	B+
GETTING STARTED:	D+
GRAPHICS:	B+
SOUND CHECK:	A
OVERALL	B+

Waterloo delivers more of what's made the series so successful, plus some nifty new extras.

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of their respective companies.
Interactive Software

A lackluster dungeon crawler

DeathKeep

DeathKeep is a disappointment. This Windows 95 follow-up to 1993's Dungeon Hack finds SSI and TSR reuniting on a skeletal RPG that never offers much to grab onto.

You're provided a bare sliver of story (find the three orbs that open the legendary dwarven portal), given a choice of three fixed characters, and plopped down, sans equipment, in a first-person dungeon that resembles a skating rink.

A world of trouble awaits—not so much from the inhabitants, who do a slow dissolve once whacked with the appropriate weapon, as from the game itself. Movement is awkward: balky when using the keyboard and a bit too free and easy when using the mouse. The inventory is a transparency superimposed on the game screen. It reverses the items your character is holding in his or her left and right hands in the menu bar, often with confusing results.

The cartoony monsters look as though they're on loan from Witchaven (not a compliment). The graphics are too broad to offer realism or atmosphere. And the game's content is perilously thin—an endless trail of armor, potions, and spell scrolls. There's no one to talk to and, as far as I could tell, no real puzzles. The shame of it all is that the music is magnificent and the game engine fairly decent. The environments aren't true 3-D, but a persuasive simulation of same, with bridges, ramps, suspended rooms, and other exotic architecture.

Back up a bit, SSI: You had a promising game here once. In its present state, DeathKeep isn't likely to please anyone.

—Peter Olafson

A good game engine and soundtrack can't save DeathKeep from the hacker dungeon.

DeathKeep
SSI
800-601-7529
www.ssionline.com

Platform: Win 95 CD
Requires: 486/66, 8MB RAM, Win 95, double-speed CD-ROM drive, sound card
List Price: $39.95

GAMEPLAY:	C-
GETTING STARTED:	C
GRAPHICS:	C-
SOUND CHECK:	B
OVERALL	D+

An average flipper

Total Pinball 3D

Two years ago, 21st Century came out with Pinball Fantasies, which may be the greatest pinball game ever. So it was with great anticipation that I loaded up the company's latest foray into the world of silverball. After spending quite a bit of time slapping the flippers, I must admit that 21st Century still owns the rights to the best pinball game ever. Unfortunately, it isn't Total Pinball 3D.

This game is fun, no question about it. Total Pinball comes with four tables that you may have already played in 21st Century's Pinball Mania: Tarantula, Jailbreak, Kick-Off, and Jackpot. This time, however, they've been turned into static, three-dimensional tables, a nice change of pace from scrolling pinball games. (You can still play on the scrolling 2-D versions, if you like.) There's also a built-in statistics package that will keep track of your weak points and show you the best way to improve your play. Want a real challenge? You have the option of playing 10 balls at once.

Total Pinball is fun, but it fails to reproduce the feel of a real pinball machine.

Nevertheless, this particular version, unlike Pinball Fantasies, fails to reproduce the true *feel* of pinball. The flippers don't punch like real flippers—they act more like they're moving underwater. And the ball doesn't behave like a real pinball. Sometimes there's a little too much friction in its movement, while other times it bounces around like a Super Ball.

Total Pinball 3D falls just short of being a really good pinball game. If you want a great pinball game, give 21st Century a call. Just don't opt for Total Pinball 3D. *—Shane Mooney*

Total Pinball 3D
21st Century
716-872-1200
www.21stcent.com

Platform: DOS/Win 95 CD
Requires: 486DX/33, 4MB RAM, MS-DOS 5.0, Super VGA
List Price: $29.95

GAMEPLAY:	C
GETTING STARTED:	A-
GRAPHICS:	B-
SOUND CHECK:	C
OVERALL	C+

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Call 1-800-771-3772 for Game Rating information.

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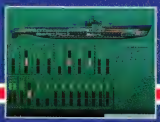


IBM 256-color SVGA

Gain supremacy over the Shadowlord.

Doing Generally Fantastic at Fantasy General

By John P. Withers

Aspiring Fantasy Generals will find that the added complication of spells and multiplicity of unit types can make this the hardest of the General series. Fortunately, after many sleepless nights, we have the strategies and tactics that can give you the edge in the battle for Aer.

Conservation

Strategically, only one consideration exists: conserve and promote your core units. As each unit gains experience, it becomes more capable of attack and defense. While you can just breeze through the first two continents on raw recruits and new units, the tide will definitely begin turning in favor of the Shadowlord if you are still pushing raw recruits out onto the battlefield by the third theater.

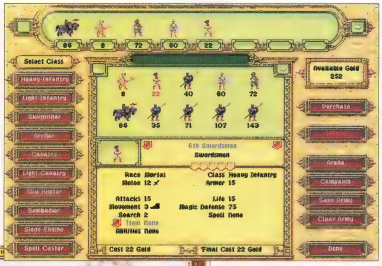
That concept may seem obvious to anyone who's played Panzer or Allied General, but Fantasy General adds its own twist by making a distinction between mortal and nonmortal troops. While mortal troops normally aren't as strong as their nonmortal counterparts, mortal troops have one major advantage: They can be upgraded to more powerful units later in the game. Nonmortal units on the other hand, stay as they are until they're killed.

Because of this difference, the winning general must avoid relying too much on nonmortal, magical troops. As a good rule of thumb, you should try to ensure that a bare minimum of half of your units are mortal, upgradable units.

Magic Troops

Nevertheless, don't underestimate the importance of your magical troops, even though they are generally weak and slow. With careful use, you will find that they can mean the difference between winning decisive victories and having your core units take a beating. Healers are particularly important.

Make sure you buy plenty of healers as soon as they become available. At least two or three healers will improve your game tremendously. Also, don't be afraid to put them near the front. Remember, healers can heal themselves as well as other troops, so don't put them too far from the action. And *use them every turn*! This might seem obvious, but when you are coordinating the actions of two main battle groups with air support, it's easy to forget to use your healers.



It's tempting, but don't overload your army with magic units.

Use Volunteer Units for scouting.

Voluntary Action

Volunteers are of paramount importance in helping you create and promote your core units. They exist to take the heat for your regulars. Use volunteers for dangerous spotting and deep attack missions.

You might also send out a volunteer unit when you want to set an ambush. As you play, you'll notice that the computer forces tend to concentrate their fire on one unit. You can use this strategy to your advantage by sending a volunteer unit out slightly ahead of a powerful force of your regulars. When the enemy forms a tactically unsound cluster around your sacrifice, attack them. Often, you'll even be able to get the sacrificial unit out and well behind your own lines to get healed up.

Archers

Some units are simply better than others. Light infantry and light cavalry, for instance, are less useful than some of the other units. But archers are worth their weight in gold because they serve triple duty.

Archers act as defensive units by providing defensive fire for any unit they are adjacent to that's attacked. They also provide anti-aircraft fire with their capacity to shoot at air units. And they can attack on their own. Any good army should have at least two archer units.

Air Superiority

Ruling the air doesn't mean you'll win the war, but it sure helps. Sky hunters are a necessity. Buy the best unit-type available as soon as possible. In the opening turns of a battle, your archers, sky hunters, siege engines, and character spells (if you are playing Krell) should be used entirely to get rid of any enemy sky hunters. Once that's done, use your ground troops to kill any enemy siege engines and archers. With your sky hunters' freedom to bomb enemy ground forces unimpeded, your troops will gain a huge edge.

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Strategy & Tactics

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Silent Hunter

By Daniel Morris

Line up your targets broadside, so you can fire at a profile.

It's a rugged command—at sea for up to 10 weeks at a time, cruising hostile waters in what amounts to an iron coffin. The year is 1941, and the Pacific War is going to be won or lost beneath the waves. Stand at attention: These tips could mean the difference between making admiral and feeding the fishes.

Stealth

It's not called the Silent Service for nothing. Don't announce your presence until you've patiently lined up the best possible shot. You won't be noticed until you fire, so don't be afraid to get up close and personal with the ships on the outskirts of an enemy convoy.

The extensive Interviews section provides a wealth of advice from submarine-campaign veterans.

Ideally, you'll want to be fighting at night, because as soon as your torpedoes are away, you'll be spotted, and you have a much better chance of escaping under the cover of darkness. In daylight hours, it's a good idea to get in close using radar and keep your periscope safely submerged until you're ready to strike.

The Approach

Once you have your contact, determine its course and maneuver to intercept it. Sit yourself on the ship's line of travel and wait in ambush. Be situated at a perpendicular angle to your object. You want to be looking at its profile so you have a nice fat target.

Optimum killing range is about 1,000 yards. Be sure the red targeting triangle in your periscope view is locked solid under your target and let 'em loose. Spread your torpedoes, waiting a few seconds between shots to space out the hits.

The Escape

Don't get greedy—slam torpedoes into one or two close targets and then turn tail and run. Keep your ears open for any pursuing ships pinging you.

Get a target lock on the nearest pursuer and watch its distance as you flee. If they're going to catch you, crash dive to your maximum safety depth and start your "Crazy Ivans," zigging and zagging. If you begin to pull away from your pursuers, hold your course. If they're still closing, a violent turn in either direction might be in order. Your aft torpedo tubes are awfully handy for dropping a lethal wake in the path of pursuing destroyers.

Quickly surfacing and blasting away with your deck gun can be an effective shock tactic.

The Shallow End

You'll spend a lot of time near land stalking port traffic, so be aware of your depth. In water shallower than 200 feet, crash dives are not an option. But a good shock tactic is to execute an emergency surface if you're cornered. Blow your ballast tanks and then go to your deck gun. If you do it fast and furious, you may get the drop on the bad guys and line up a mouth-watering turkey shoot.

Discretion

Tonnage, tonnage, tonnage—it's your mantra. Slow and steady wins the campaign, not war-movie heroics. Cruise patiently until you pick up a small convoy sailing by itself. Small convoys are lightly escorted and, at times, unchaperoned. While the larger convoys have juicier targets (like carriers), they are usually in the middle of a nasty picket ring, and chances are, you won't get out of there alive.

So play the odds. Take one or two stragglers in a lightning strike and then return to open sea. Wait another night and repeat until your tubes are empty. This war is to be won through attrition, and victory is years away from your first castoff. Be patient, resilient, and ruthless, and the ocean is yours. ■

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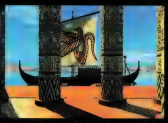

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Strategy & Tactics

If you can't beat 'em—cheat!

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Battle Arena Toshinden

You've trained hard, sacrificed everything, for a shot at Toshinden. Isn't it time you enjoyed yourself?

Type the following cheats during gameplay:

- FUNNYHEADS: Gives fighters big heads.
- LIFEISUNFAIR: Use the number keys to perform special moves.
- GIMMEJIM: Lets you select bosses.
- VIRTUAL1: Changes the perspective to first-person. (Go to Options menu and adjust camera angle to bring perspective back to normal.)

Destruction Derby

Smash 'em, bash 'em, crash 'em, crush 'em. This ain't no joyride. Time to power up.

For invincibility, select "wreckin racing" and enter your name as "!damage!" To select the number of cars, enter your name as "nplayer",

Rayman

Life was perfect—until Mr. Dark came along. Now it's your job to restore peace to the land. Run, punch, and roam with these handy codes.

- kom0ogdk: Brings your number of lives back up to 5.
- 86e40g91: Gives you 10 additional Tings.
- b76b7081: Lets you access the hidden "Breakout" game.
- 2x2rmfmf: Gives you the Golden Fist power.
- trj8p: Gives you 99 lives.
- o8feh: Allows you to "win" the map and progress to the next map level. (Won't work in Candy Chateau.)
- en5gol2g: Gives you all of Rayman's powers.
- 4ctrepfj: Access all six worlds.

(A reader request from Ted Nielsen)

Stonekeep

Years ago, you survived the cataclysm that buried Stonekeep. Now, as you wander its ancient corridors, it's time to cheat death once again.

To become invulnerable:

1. Take a skull from the inventory and make it your cursor.
2. Press Left-Shift, then F9. If you do this correctly, Drake's hit points will never drop below 1. The cheat doesn't affect anybody else in your party and needs to be reset each time you play.

(A reader request from Levi Fanning)

EarthSiege 2

The Cybrids are back, and this time, they're determined. Help your HERCs with these debug cheats.

To activate the cheats, create a shortcut to EarthSiege 2 using the command line D:\SIERRA\ES2\Es.exe -SPRUNKNOWN. Launch the game via the shortcut, then use the following key combos:

- Alt + < or >: Lets you listen to cockpit announcements and warnings.
- Alt + [up or down arrow]: Warps your Herc 12 meters in the direction you choose.
- Alt + [left or right arrow]: Warps and turns you in the direction you choose.
- Ctrl + N: Lets you view the battle from combatants' perspectives, including structures. (Press Alt + N to toggle between all combatants and structures.)
- Alt + Ctrl + N: Nukes one nearby enemy. It can be used multiple times, but it won't destroy all bases.
- Alt + Ctrl + S: Causes several HERC textures to appear.
- Alt + S: Freezes the intelligence. Pressing Alt + S a second time returns gameplay to normal.
- Alt + [the numpad + key]: Single-step the game one frame at a time after you've frozen the intelligence.

Note: These cheats may make the game a bit unstable. For instance, they crash all Instant Action games.

Strife

Even The Order can't beat an agent who can go anywhere, kill anyone, and never die. You know what to do.

After pausing the game, type the following cheats:

OMNIPOTENT: Makes you invulnerable (turns on/off).

BOOMSTIX: Gives you all weapons (does not include Sigil).

JIMMY: Gives you keys.

DONNYTRUMP: Gives you gold (also grants stat tokens).

PUMPUP: Power up (type first letter of increase desired).

TOPO: Map (grants full map, then scanner, then back).

STONECOLD: Kills all level inhabitants.

GRIPPER: No slide.

LEGO: Sigil piece (adds one piece each time).

SPINx (where "x" is a two-digit number): Changes music.

SCOOTx (where "x" is a one-digit number): Intralevel position change.

RIFTx (where "x" is a two-digit number): Level warp.

Is a certain game driving you nuts? Can't figure out how to kill an enemy, solve a puzzle, or find a key? We can help! Send your cheat requests to *PC Games*, Attn: Strategy & Tactics, 951 Mariner's Island Blvd., Suite 700, San Mateo, CA 94404; fax: 415-349-7482; e-mail: ccohen@ifw.com.

Compiled by Corey Cohen

Psychologists say inside every 18 to 35-year-old male, there lies a potential psychotic killer.

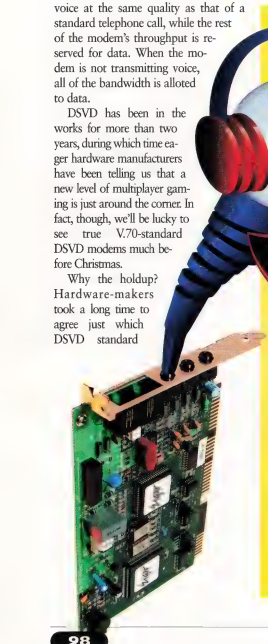
By Christine Grech Wendin

DSVD: Say What?

Thanks to a new modem standard called V.70, more commonly known as Digital Simultaneous Voice and Data (DSVD), you'll finally be able to talk trash while doing in your buddy at Duke—all on a single telephone line. DSVD modems work by splitting the bandwidth into two distinct chunks: 8Kbps is used to transmit voice at the same quality as that of a standard telephone call, while the rest of the modem's throughput is reserved for data. When the modem is not transmitting voice, all of the bandwidth is alloted to data.

DSVD has been in the works for more than two years, during which time eager hardware manufacturers have been telling us that a new level of multiplayer gaming is just around the corner. In fact, though, we'll be lucky to see true V.70-standard DSVD modems much before Christmas.

Why the holdup? Hardware-makers took a long time to agree just which DSVD standard would win out. Finally, the International Telecommunications Union settled on the V.70 spec in May, and it was undergoing formal ratification at press time. Now modem- and PC-makers have a common standard to write to, ensuring that a modem from one company will work with a modem from another.



"Oh, I've got you now. You're in trouble. You're really hurting," I said. "Especially if you come into the waterfall room." "I have 200 Health and full Armor—I am not hurting," Steve boasted, his voice ringing in my ears. "I'm gonna find your sissy snipin' hide and blast it into the next dimension." "Not if you come into the waterfall room." I knew that last jibe was too much for him. He'd be there any second, and as soon as he entered the narrow hallway to go up the stairs, I'd hit Ctrl and the 14 pipebombs I planted would blast him into the next dimension. I saw him tentatively poke his head in the door. "Where are you?" he asked. "I'm in the waterfall room, just like I said," I replied. He was inching toward the hallway. Finally, he started sprinting toward it. "Hey, Steve..." "What do you want, sniper boy?" he asked as he entered the hallway. "I want you to DIE DIE DIE!!!!!!!" I hit Ctrl and watched his Duke explode into rivers of blood. "Damn—I shoulda known something was up," he said. "Good one." "Thanks..."

Standard Practice

While there's now an agreed-upon standard, that doesn't guarantee that your DSVD modem will really work with your friend's DSVD modem. That's because while the V.70 standard was slowly being formalized, some modem and chip manufacturers decided to get a jump on the market with their own proprietary DSVD solutions. These modems, including such products as Eiger Labs' HeadOn and Hayes' Accura 288 DSVD, function as DSVD modems only when connecting to identical modems. If they connect to another company's DSVD modem, they operate like ordinary modems.

Do these modem-makers think we're crazy? Why would we throw away good money on a DSVD modem that doesn't perform up to our expectations? Well, most of the companies with proprietary DSVD modems, including IBM and Diamond, say that they will eventually offer software and ROM (read-only memory) chip upgrades to make the modems V.70-compliant.

Two other technologies also complicate matters. An upcoming telecommunications standard called V.34Q, which is intended for video conferencing, poses a challenge to the V.70 DSVD standard. V.34Q takes DSVD one step further and enables a single telephone line to transmit video in addition to voice and data. Proponents of the standard argue that by turning off the video portion, V.34Q can also perform digital simultaneous voice and data. V.34Q is still in the review stage at this point, so it's unclear when it will be finalized. Yet another challenge to V.70 is an approach called ASVD, or Analog Simultaneous Voice and Data. This technology differs from DSVD in that it transmits voice as a hybrid of analog and digital signals.

The V.70 camp argues that both of these techniques are inferior to DSVD. The biggest charge is that ASVD and

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18 to 3[illegible]

a potential psychotic killer.

V.34Q require more bandwidth (16Kbps vs. V.70's 8Kbps) to produce a voice signal that's lower in quality and has a longer delay. Also, because the two technologies integrate voice and data processing, line noise will more readily affect voice quality than it does in a V.70 DSVD modem. Finally, proponents say V.70 modems will be easier to upgrade when better voice-coding technologies are available because they're based on a modular design rather than ASVD and V.34Q's integrated approach.

But not everyone's convinced that V.70, or DSVD in general, has a bright future, including powerhouse Creative Labs. The company is taking a wait-and-see approach because it is not yet convinced that this is where the multiplayer action is, since, unlike the Internet, DSVD is limited to two-player gaming.

Here and Now

So, just what should you make of all of this? Our advice is to wait until modems meeting the V.70 standard are available. If, however, you want to jump on the DSVD bandwagon now, here's what you need to know about the current crop of DSVD modems. (Also be sure to check out next month's Tech Shop for reviews of some of these proprietary modems.)

First off, get your screwdriver handy, because almost all of the DSVD modems currently available are internal models. Another caveat: Some of the units are strictly for Win 3.1 or Win 95, so they'll do you no good when it comes to DOS games.

Thankfully, many of these new modems are Plug and Play, so installation is less of a hassle than it used to be. But just because you've got the board up and running doesn't mean that getting your games going will be easy. For each game you play, the modem must send an unique initialization string to the modem it's calling. For example, to play Duke with a pair of Hayes Accura 288 DSVD modems, you must edit the default initialization string of ATZ to this complex gibberish: AT&F&C1&D2S46=0&K0-S5E=1. Clearly, not for the faint of heart.

Eventually, games will be written to take advantage of DSVD, and will have the necessary settings built-in. In the meantime, you'd better type carefully. And while companies like Hayes and Eiger make a point to have the initialization strings for popular games available, more business-oriented modems don't. If you buy one of these, be prepared to do some sleuthing for the correct settings on the Internet.

It might be a little more than you're willing to deal with now, but it should be easier when all DSVD modems conform to the V.70 spec. If you and your regular game-playing buddy just have to give DSVD a try, make sure you both get exactly the same modem. And don't say we didn't warn you. ■

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Mystery Word Grid

		H					MYSTERY
			E				___
P	I	N	C	H		W	___
		R					___
S							WORD
							___

WORD LIST and LETTER CODE chart

PINCH .....W	PRESS.....K	BLAST .....A	WRECK .....D
BREAK .....Z	PUNCH .....S	SPRAY C	TURBO V
STOMP .....T	STAND.....R	PRESS .....E	DREAM.....O
CRUSH.....I	SCORE.....H	SLANT L	CHASE.....P

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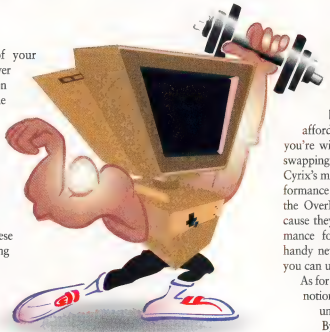
By David Gerding

CPU Update



The most important part of your computer is the one you never see—that little slab of silicon on the motherboard known as the CPU. The CPU, or chip, is the heart and soul of a PC. The faster it beats and the more cleverly it thinks, the faster the action.

Upgrade to the latest 3-D graphics card and some of your games will run faster. Step up to the next level of CPU and *everything* on the PC is faster. It's that simple. These days, the silicon genies are conjuring bit engines that not only follow the "bigger is better" philosophy, but, like a four-cylinder sports car, work smarter in the same box. In many cases, you won't even need to get a new PC. To up your ante, just toss in another chip.

Intel's Megahertz Race

While chip giant Intel may be facing more serious competition than it used to, the company remains the technology trendsetter in the PC world. Intel has plenty of aces up its sleeve, and gamers will reap the rewards as major new additions to the Intel architecture appear in the next 18 months.

While the company's most important near-term development is the MMX architecture (see sidebar "MMX: Do More With Less?"), other technologies will also help elevate PC gaming to ever-higher levels. The most obvious is the megahertz (MHz) race. This figure measures how many times per second a CPU cycles instructions. It's comparable to the maximum rpm of an engine. As you read this, Intel is beginning to ship large quantities of its latest 200MHz chips.

With all that extra horsepower, expect your games to pick up the pace. Additionally, your CPU may have enough muscle to take on new functions. For example, a company called PCtel has designed what it calls a Host Signal Processing (HSP) modem. The device is about one-fourth the size of a traditional modem and relies on your system's processor to do the bulk of the work. The modem can also be upgraded via software, so you can add new features without buying a new board.

Getting Up to Speed

To participate in this gold rush of faster clock cycles, Intel is offering current Pentium owners new Pentium OverDrive upgrade chips. You open your PC, eject your old Pentium chip using the little lever built into today's motherboards, and lower in the new chip. Voila! Your 60MHz or 66MHz Pentium becomes a 120 or 133, respectively. Likewise, a 75 jumps to a 125, a 90 to a 150, and a 100 to a 166. There's a Pentium OverDrive for each model, starting at around $379 at the low end and topping out at a wallet-crunching $629.

In practice, we found the OverDrive chips really do improve speed dramatically, offering gains on the order of 40 percent to 50 percent. You shouldn't expect miracles, however. It's up to you to decide whether the boost is worth the price.

If you've got an older system based on a 486 or Pentium 60 or 66, you may be better off upgrading your entire motherboard or waiting until you can afford a brand-new machine. In fact, if you're willing to go through the hassle of swapping in a motherboard, we found that Cyrix's motherboard upgrade kits offer performance boosts comparable or superior to the OverDrive at lower prices. That's because they optimize every aspect of performance for faster operation, and include handy new technologies like a PCI slot so you can use faster graphics cards.

As for the clock-speed race, surrender any notion of "catching up" to the high end unless you have very deep pockets. By Christmas 1997, the clock speeds on Pentiums will have moved up to more than 266 MHz. But Intel isn't counting on more megahertz alone to keep the PC humming as the gaming platform of choice.

Accelerated Graphics Port

Set to debut in mid- to late 1997 is a new motherboard specification and chip design called Accelerated Graphics Port (AGP). AGP architecture will bypass the system bus, allowing the CPU and the graphics memory to talk to each other on a blazingly fast "direct line" unhindered by other bus traffic. Who cares? You should, and by next year, you will. That's because Intel is specifically targeting 3-D graphics with this technology, hoping AGP "enables the use of main memory for z-buffering, alpha blending, and texturing, providing the benefits of high-performance 3-D graphics at mainstream PC price points," says the company.

In plain English, AGP means rocket-fast PC graphics, faster than anything we've seen to date. In particular, the amount of texture memory for 3-D graphics will be limited only by the amount of system memory on your machine, rather than by the amount of more-expensive video RAM

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Wither the Pentium Pro?

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of AGP is that Intel is planning to build it into only Pentium Pro chips. Clearly, Intel is planning on starting the process of making the Pentium Pro a mainstream chip sometime in '97 as well. So look for Pentium Pro system prices to drop below $3,000 next year.

The magnificent thing about the Pentium Pro is that running at the same clock speed (MHz), this chip can be nearly twice as fast as a plain old Pentium chip. The downside to the Pentium Pro is that it's so optimized for 32-bit code that you see those performance gains only on 32-bit operating system like Windows NT. Unfortunately, Microsoft's DirectX game drivers are not yet available for NT, and they won't be until next year at the earliest. But if you aren't already salivating at the possibilities Intel is cooking up, consider this: By the end of '97, Intel insiders tell us to expect Pentium Pro systems running at close to 400MHz!

The Underdogs

Intel may still be top dog, but a bunch of other chipmakers—including Advanced Micro Devices, Cyrix, and Texas Instruments—are working extra hard to provide some real competition. Intel's competitors are using a new "P" rating for their chips. This benchmark, backed by every one of the challengers, is a source of great irritation to Intel. According to the companies that use it, a P rating of 100+ means the chip performs as well as or better than a Pentium 100.

That's good news for gamers. In fact, Cyrix was so concerned about PC vendors getting the implementation of the 6x86 systems right that the company entered the PC business. You can get a fully loaded Cyrix 6x86 P200 PC, said to perform as well as a Pentium 200, for a mere $2,700.

There's even better news for upgraders: You can replace your entire motherboard with Cyrix's 6x86-166 Motherboard Upgrade Kit for about $500. The upgrade supports speedy EDO RAM and has fast built-in serial ports, the latest BIOS, and other up-to-the-minute PC improvements. And you can pull off this upgrade even if you have an old 486 or 386 machine.

Cyrix is also selling the 6x86 technology to companies like Evergreen, which offers standalone upgrade chips that replace your existing Pentium chip, just like Intel's own OverDrive chips. M2, Cyrix's answer to the Pentium Pro, is scheduled to appear late this year. That's a good thing even for gamers who have no intention of buying a Cyrix chip. Every bit of competition pushes Intel to raise the quality bar—and lower prices. ■

MMX: Do More With Less?

What is MMX? It stands for Multi-Media eXtensions, and it's the next big thing in Intel-compatible chips. In a gesture of goodwill toward gamers and other consumers, Intel has licensed the MMX instruction set to the major chip cloners, so MMX is destined to become a mainstay of the Intel-compatible architecture.

For several years, Intel has been looking at the multimedia side of PCs, trying to figure out a low-cost way to make the CPU better at handling the computationally intensive stuff like decompressing video and running Doom in higher resolutions at faster frame rates. For now, the company has abandoned an earlier and more involved effort called NSP (native signal processing), which would have put the kind of signal-processing technology found in CD players right into CPUs.

Epic's Unreal is designed specifically for MMX.

Instead, MMX adds some 57 new instructions to the existing menu that the CPU can execute. These special MMX instructions work on larger chunks of bytes, up to eight at a time, that are also part of the new MMX specification.

The benefits of MMX are realized in any process in which similar operations are executed on large amounts of bytes, theoretically yielding up to an eightfold improvement in performance at the same clock speed.

Let's say a game program uses a single byte to represent a pixel on the screen. When you move forward, the program must change the value of every color (byte) on the screen by some number; one way it does this is by making the colors in the background brighter by adding a number to the value. So while a typical CPU would add a value to every byte in the graphics memory using a loop and one instruction per byte, an MMX-equipped CPU can add that value to eight bytes at a time in a single instruction, finishing the process in one-eighth of the time. MMX can be used to enhance not only graphics, but also sound, speech recognition, and even artificial intelligence. Some games, like Epic Megagames' upcoming Unreal, will be designed specifically to take advantage of MMX.

Does that mean you should scrap plans for buying a 3-D graphics accelerator this Christmas? Depends. While most 3-D games combine integer operations known as transformations, "looking up" the results of complex math in pre-calculated tables, many high-end 3-D–rendering programs use floating-point math. And MMX, an integer-based system, won't accelerate floating-point operations, the way 3Dfx's Voodoo Graphics does. Thus, 3D Realms' upcoming Prey won't play as well on a PC equipped with MMX and Direct3D as it would on a standard Pentium with a 3Dfx card. MMX will, however, accelerate 3-D games for programmers that know how to use it—and many will.

So if you're serious about games, don't buy a new system until the MMX machines become available. Intel is likely to downplay the availability or relevance of the new technology until it clears existing inventories, but don't be fooled. MMX is worth the wait. —*DG*

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GTE Entertainment

Hardware Spotlight

THE SKY'S THE LIMIT

Mach V

Rating: A

The latest trend in computing is the game PC: Big-name companies such as AST, Compaq, IBM, and NEC are targeting power gamers by building systems with meaty hard drives, gobs of RAM, rockin' sound systems, popular controllers, and 3-D graphics. While it's great for gamers that the big boys are catching on to the gaming market, it's certainly not a new concept. Falcon Northwest Computing Systems has been building game PCs for four years.

Unlike its competitors, Falcon doesn't have a predefined game system; it custom-builds each PC. You get to specify exactly what you want—there are no components du jour. For *PC Games*, Falcon built an impressive **Mach V** system that housed these top-of-the-line components: a Pentium 166 with 512KB pipeline burst cache, 16MB EDO RAM, 2GB hard drive, Diamond Stealth 3D 2000, Toshiba 8X CD-ROM drive, Sound Blaster 16 PnP, Roland SCD-15 music card, Altec Lansing three-piece sound system, CH Products F-16 Combatstick and Throttle, U.S. Robotics 33.6Kbps modem, and a 17-inch Princeton monitor. Wow! What a résumé. On the software side, pickings are a bit slim. Falcon throws in the usual suite of shareware games including Duke Nukem 3D, Descent II, and Doom.

As you can imagine, the Mach V flies. We tried to make it flinch with such resource hogs as U.S. Navy Fighters, Descent II, and Advanced Tactical Fighters, but it handled everything smoothly. And when we fired up 3-D accelerated games such as Destruction Derby and Descent II, we were treated to dazzlingly smooth graphics.

Falcon Northwest's customized Mach V PCs will have you flying high with all the equipment gamers crave.

PHOTOGRAPH BY WEINBERG & CLARK

Its top-notch performance is key, but you'll also appreciate the Mach V's little extras. For example, its Focus keyboard is one of the best we've used—it's amazingly light and responsive. The extensive binder manual that comes packed with the system is also impressive. Prepared especially for each buyer, it's got all the answers to your questions, including system settings, troubleshooting help, and manuals and tech-support contacts for the various components. If that doesn't do the trick, the Falcon team will do all they can to solve the problem. They were very responsive when an initial system wasn't working correctly and quickly shipped us out a new model. And they weren't just pandering to the press; that's standard practice for all of their customers.

Of course, you can expect to pay a little more for the high-quality components and service. The Mach V that we looked at was going for around $4,200, but Falcon expects the price to drop to around $4,000 by the time you read this. Bear in mind that if you do plan on getting a Mach V, you'll probably end up with a slightly different configuration, since the company regularly upgrades to the latest proven, available technology. Don't be surprised to see 3Dfx graphics cards in future systems, along with faster memory, MMX, and enhancements such as the new Universal System Bus, among others. One upgrade you'll definitely want to opt for is more memory: 16MB just isn't enough on a dream machine like the Mach V.

Whatever's inside your Falcon Northwest box, you can bet you won't be disappointed. (Falcon Northwest Computer Systems; 800-258-6778; approximately $4,000)

—Christine Grech Wendin

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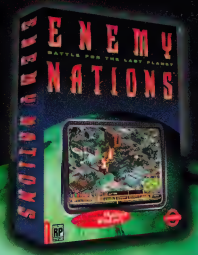

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AFFORDABLE VIRTUAL REALITY

SimulEyes VR

Rating: B-

The SimulEyes VR is cheap and easy to install, but few games support it.

It's many a gamer's wide-grinned joy to strap a virtual-reality system onto his head and dive into 3-D environments. But the cost of a personal VR set has been prohibitive for most, and the dream of a home system generally out of reach. StereoGraphics intends for its **SimulEyes VR** glasses to be an affordable, mass-market VR system. The $179 SimulEyes foregoes the head-tracking found on the more expensive VR headsets and supplies strictly 3-D graphics. Not only is it relatively cheap, it's hassle-free: The SimulEyes took all of five minutes to set up.

You don't need to open your PC to get it going. A handy design allows you to plug the system into your VGA port and then connect your monitor, without any dip-switch toggling, interrupt-adjusting, or screwdriving. No cards need be installed. (You will need batteries, though.) Configuring games for use with SimulEyes is also a breeze.

But then trouble enters paradise. The quality of the 3-D graphics is so-so, and even after refreshing the redraw rate, it's impossible to escape flicker. There is also a woeful dearth of compatible games, at least for the moment.

The included software bundle features Descent: Destination Saturn, which is what you'll spend your time playing. Descent looks good, if a bit blotchy, and its omnidirectional movement makes fullest use of the 3-D graphics. The tag-alongs are Wolfenstein 3-D (thanks a lot, guys) and VR Slingshot. It's not enough, though StereoGraphics has announced development plans with Apogee/3D Realms (for a SimulEyes Duke Nukem 3D), Interplay, Accolade, Reality Bytes, and others.

If VR is your burning desire and you're willing to wait for games to play, SimulEyes VR may be a worthwhile investment. You won't quite feel like the Lawnmower Man, but you sure can't beat the price. (StereoGraphics; www.stereographics.com; 415-459-4500; $179) —*Daniel Morris*

Gaming Hardware Hall of Fame

Wondering what hardware to buy to get the best game machine for your money? It's easy. Just check *PC Games*' running list of our top hardware recommendations. Each month, we'll update the Hall of Fame as we review new products.

Category	Product	Details	Our Rating
PC	Falcon Mach V	Falcon Northwest; 800-258-6778; approx. $4,000	A
Monitor	Nokia Valugraph 447L	Nokia; 800-296-6542; $699	B+
CD-ROM drive	Toshiba TXM3501E1	Toshiba; 714-457-0777; price not available	B+
Sound card	AWE32	Creative Labs; 800-998-5227; $249.95	A
Speakers	SoundWorks	Cambridge SoundWorks; 800-367-4434; $219	A+
Joystick	F-16 Combatstick	CH Products; 619-598-2518; $69.95	A+
Gamepad	GrIP System	Advanced Gravis; 800-663-8558; $99.95	A+
Modem	Supra 28.8	Supra; 800-727-8772; $219 internal, $299 external	A
Graphics card	Diamond Stealth 64	Diamond Multimedia; 800-468-5846; $229	A-
Key add-on	NEC MultiSync M700 monitor	NEC; 800-632-4636; $899	A-

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INTERNET : http://www.microforum.com
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By Patrick Marshall

S.O.S.

Wing Commander IV under Win 95, finding the fastest computer, and mastering multiple hardware conflicts.

Winging It

I've got a problem running Wing Commander IV. The game runs okay unless there is some type of background, in which case it jerks so badly that it's impossible to play. The movies and sounds work just fine, so I don't think it's my equipment. I'm using Windows 95.
R. Curtis
San Francisco, CA

Although Win 95 is much better at running DOS games than Win 3.1 is, you'll find that Wing Commander IV runs a lot slower under Win 95 than it does under plain old DOS. Win 95 does offer extensive controls for fine-tuning the way it handles DOS programs—including the amount of conventional, extended, and expanded memory it devotes to each game—but your best bet is to make a boot disk and reboot in DOS when you want to play. Wing Commander IV comes with a utility that leads you through the process of creating a boot disk.

If that doesn't solve your problem, you've probably got a driver conflict. Read "Serious Conflicts" below for tips on how to resolve device conflicts.

Driving Me Crazy

If I try to play either Dark Forces or Hyper 3D Pinball from the directory on my hard drive where I've installed them, my machine tells me it can't find the CD. But if I go to the CD drive (G:) and type "G:\dir", the directory for either game flashes on my screen. After that, if I change back to my hard drive and try playing the game, it works. What can I do to avoid this process?
David Hunker
dhunkr@flash.net

Try reinstalling the games. Nine times out of 10, the cause of this type of problem is that the path information in the game's configuration files, which are stored on the hard drive, is out of date. Reinstalling the software should correct any incorrect path statements.

Windows Games on a Mac

I purchased a game that runs on Windows, which I don't have. Is there anything I can get that will run Windows games on a Macintosh? I have a Mac Performa 635CD.
Bradley C. Slick
Pompano Beach, FL

Well, sort of.

Insignia Solutions makes a line of emulation software products, including several that allow Macintoshes to run Windows. SoftWindows 95, which costs about $359, brings Win 95 to the Mac, and SoftWindows 3.0 ($309) does the same for Win 3.1.

Problem is, your Performa 635CD won't run either emulator. SoftWindows 95 requires a high-end Mac to run acceptably and SoftWindows 3.0 works only with Power Macs. SoftWindows 1.0 ($199) will work on your system, but it provides Win 3.1 performance equivalent to a mere 286. Most people will find that intolerable.

A better—and significantly more expensive—solution for running Windows on some Macintoshes is a hardware add-in card that essentially provides the equivalent of a 486 or Pentium motherboard. The OrangePC series of emulator cards, for example, provides both 486 and Pentium processors and costs between $700 and $2,500, depending upon the model you choose. Unfortunately, there is no such hardware option available that will work with the Performa 635. In your case, we'd suggest returning the game.

Buying the Best

This is probably the first time that somebody is writing you from the Middle East. I want you to help me with two things:

First, I'm planing on buying a new PC and don't know which to go for: a 166MHz Pentium or a 200MHz Pentium Pro. As a Win 95 user and gamer, not a programmer, I want to get the machine that is speedier and will be compatible with current and future games.

Secondly, as I'll also be getting a good-quality 20-inch monitor, I want to know whether there's a substantial performance difference between the 1280-by-1024 and the 1600-by-1200 resolution screens.
Sherif Koth
Jaddah, Saudi Arabia

You're right about one thing: Your letter is the first one I've received from the Middle East.

As for which Pentium to buy, I wish I had your problem. Obviously, the Pentium Pro is going to be faster and more powerful than the 166MHz Pentium, and you won't lose any compatibility. But you're going to pay a hefty premium to get what will actually be a rather modest performance boost for most games and standard productivity applications. Expect to pay about $800 more for the Pentium Pro 200 system than the Pentium 166.

As for your monitor dilemma, performance of your system at various resolutions depends not on the monitor, but on the graphics adapter you're using. Many popular graphics accelerators, such as DRAM models of the Diamond Stealth 64, won't even run at 1600-by-1200, but I don't think you're going to want to run a 20-inch monitor at that resolution anyway. After all, what's the advantage of having a large monitor if you have to squint to see things on the screen?

continued on page 112

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Acclaim Entertainment (Strike)	47	Merit Studios	23
Acclaim Entertainment	62-63	Microforum	21
Activision (Mech Warrior)	27, 28-29	Microforum (Soul Trap)	109
Activision (Interstate '76)	51	Microsoft (Deadly Tide)	42
Activision (Hyperblade)	45	Microsoft	39, 67
Activision (Spycraft)	81	Mindscape (Dressmaster)	13
Activision (Time Commander)	14-15	Mindscape (Mega Race)	103
American Softworks	93	New World Computing	7
Blizzard	24-25	Novo Logic	68-69
Bethesda Software	49	Pandemonium	101
Creative Labs	C6	Philips	33-35
FormGen (Duke Nukem)	87	Philips	99
FormGen (Shadow Warrior)	57	Philips	79
FormGen (Xone Phage)	Gatefold	Philips	97
GT Entertainment (NCAA)	77	SSI (Age of Rifle)	85
GT Entertainment (Time Lapse)	95	SSI (Silent Hunter)	91
GT Entertainment (Titanic)	105	Viacom (Death Drone)	75
GT Interactive (AMOK)	89	Viacom (Enemy Nation)	107
GT Interactive (Bedlam)	73	Viacom (Slamscape)	19
GT Interactive (Nine)	83	Warner Books	11

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S.O.S *continued from page 110*

Serious Conflicts

I recently got Win 95, and it worked great until I got a new sound card, the MediaSound SW32, and a new video card, a Video-52P. They really messed up my system. From what I can tell, the sound card locks up Windows at exit, and my video card won't play anything in a DOS window. The mouse rearranges the pixels wherever the pointer goes, and sometimes it just decides to do weird things like zooming in on one part of the screen. Donald E. Prince

Prince@HiWay.net

Sounds like you've got some serious device conflicts. Don't panic; keep a cool head. First, try the easy-but-not-always-effective method.

1. Go to the Control Panel, double-click on the System icon, and select the Device Manager tab.

2. Find your display adapter in the list that appears and double-click on it.

3. Go to the Resources tab. Highlight each setting in the Resources list and see if Windows reports any conflicts.

4. If it does, consult the manual that came with your graphics adapter to select a new memory or IRQ setting. Then follow the instructions in Windows to make the change. You'll also have to make appropriate changes on the graphics adapter itself.

5. Now, go through the same process with your new sound card.

Unfortunately, Win 95 often fails to report a conflict when there actually is one. If Windows doesn't report any conflicts but you're still having problems, you're going to have to start from scratch.

1. Put your old sound card and video card back in the computer and make sure everything works properly.

2. Go to the Device Manager and click on the Computer icon.

3. In the screen that appears, you'll be able to check for open IRQs and memory ranges.

4. Configure your graphics adapter to use those settings, and install it.

5. Once you've got the new graphics adapter working properly you can repeat the process with the sound card.

It's no fun, but it should work.

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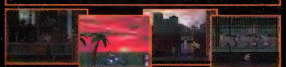

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PC GAMES

Rewrite Quake History—and Win a Free Copy.

When id Software finally released the shareware version of Quake, not only did we get a chance to get up close and personal with the Shambler and other unlovable characters, but we also got to find out what the game's title really means. No, none of us have been lying awake at night trying to figure out the riddle of Quake's name; we were more interested in when the damn thing was going to hit the Net. But anyway, since the shareware version lacks any explanation, you may not have heard the story according to id. Here's what the company's press release says:

All around the world mysterious happenings–bombings, brutal murders, and the theft of a nuclear reactor–have been rocking the earth. You have been charged by the government to figure out why.

The Slipgate, a secret device causing a sort of earthquake in the time continuum, has been developed by the government. These slipgates are used to instantly move men and equipment from one place and one time to another. But it seems that others, an evil leader and his organization–code-named Quake (by the Earth's government)–know about the slipgates and are using them to insert men inside of the earth's bases and buildings. Quake is manufacturing an army of serial killers and sending them out on a rampage of murder and theft though his own slipgates. Yet no one knows where they're coming from. The government fears this is the start of an invasion. It is your mission to find out where the hell Quake and his army are coming from, and to stop them cold. You must find the slipgate to his homebase, or dimension, and attack Quake in his own world. Armed with your trusty shotgun, you begin your mission.

So, let's see if we got this straight: Quake is a government code name for one evil dude, and it's also the code name for his nasty organization. OK, if you say so.

We figure *PC Games* readers can come up with something better than that. Tell us your version of why the most-anticipated game of the year is called Quake. And don't tell us that it's because it's going to rock the gaming world or because it's sending tremors of anticipation up your spine.

The five best suggestions will win a free copy of the retail version. If you're lucky, the guys at id may just autograph it for you.

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And while we're on the subject, tell us exactly what you think of the shareware version of Quake. Was it worth the wait? How does it compare to other hot first-person games on the market, like Duke Nukem 3D?

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To qualify, be sure to return your entry by September 27, 1996.

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The frantic level of competition in PC football gaming has reached the point where microscopic attention to detail, graphical excellence, comprehensive statistics and most importantly a high-powered gaming engine is essential if you want to be on the map. Acclaim's hard work on their football franchise has paid off with NFL Quarterback Club '97, a touchdown in every one of those areas from the all-new Artificial Intelligence down to the clearly visible numbers on the players' shirts and the logos on their helmets. Awe-inspiring 3-D rendered stadiums are the arena for 500 new plays and the souped-up A.I. means that your computer opponent learns your coaching style and play calling tendencies — no free yardage, here! QB Club '97 now tracks complete player and team statistics by game and for the entire season. And the popular simulation mode gains 30 riveting, new scenarios where you play out memorable finishes in NFL history.

The graphics are some of the best I have ever seen in a football game. Everything from laterals to QB slides features new motion-captured animations which rock. Weather conditions visibly deteriorate the field and player performance. But graphics and A.I. don't mean squat if you ain't got the details right.

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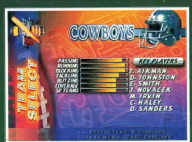
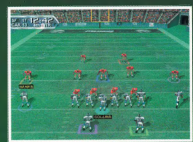
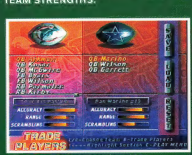


EVALUATE KEY PERSONNEL AND TEAM STRENGTHS.



PLAYER SPRITES FEATURE HELMET LOGOS AND UNIFORM NUMBERS.



TRADE PLAYERS AND BUILD A DYNASTY

WEATHER CONDITIONS AFFECT PLAYER MOVEMENT AND FIELD DETERIORATION.

Acclaim has done their homework. You can stock your team through trades and substitute any player at any position if they're not getting the job done. The redesigned play 'plaques' are slick and easy to read. And if showboating's your style then you're in highstep-pin' heaven. Acclaim promises that there'll also be a bunch of hidden teams and even wilder touchdown celebrations...for those who know the codes!

NFL Quarterback Club '97 is hitting the stores August 29th, at the beginning of the NFL season. Just like a real Quarterback, it's going to drive deep into enemy territory packing a full array of offensive weapons ranging from crisp graphics to solid gold gameplay. So if you're a PC football purist — get ready for an all-out blitz!

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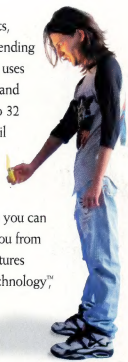

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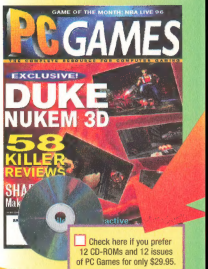

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